THE MISSIONARY CAREER AND SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY OF OTTO WITT

by

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SUMMARY

This thesis is a theological and historical study of the Swedish missionary and evangelist Peter Otto Holger Witt (1848-1923), who served as the Church of Sweden Mission's first missionary and as such launched its work amongst the Zulu people of Southern Africa in the 1870s before growing disillusioned with his national Lutheran tradition and, after following a tortuous spiritual path through generally increasing theological subjectivity, eventually becoming a loosely affiliated Pentecostal evangelist in Scandinavia.

Undoubtedly owing to the embarrassment he caused the Church of Sweden Mission by resigning from it while it was in a formative stage, but also to tension between him and its leaders, Witt has never received his due in the historiography of Swedish missions. For that matter, his role in Scandinavian nonconformist religious movements for nearly a third of a century beginning in the early 1890s is a largely untold chapter in the ecclesiastical history of the region. This thesis is intended to redress these *lacunae* by presenting Witt's career as both a foreign missionary and evangelist as well as the contours of his evolving religious thought and placing both of these emphases into the broader history of Scandinavian and other missionary endeavours amongst the Zulus, late nineteenth-century developments in Swedish Lutheranism, and the coming to northern Europe of those religious movements in which he successively became involved. As the copious documentation indicates, it is based to a great extent on little-used materials in the archives of the Church of Sweden Mission and other repositories in Scandinavia, South Africa, and the United States of America. Witt's own numerous publications also provide much of the stuff for it.

The structure of this study is essentially chronological and, within that framework, thematic with clear precedents in previous missions and ecclesiastical historiography. The first chapter is largely a critical review of previous pertinent literature, professional and otherwise, emphasising its general misunderstanding and neglect of Witt. Chapter II covers his background in nineteenth-century Swedish Lutheranism, call to the Church of Sweden Mission, and role in establishing that organisation's endeavours amongst the Zulus. Chapter III deals with the trauma of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, particularly Witt's controversial but misunderstood role in it and the place of this in the existing historiography of that conflagration. Chapter IV surveys his part in re-establishing the Swedish Lutheran mission following the war and his co-operative and at times creative role in this major task. Chapters V and VI, on the other hand, have as their respective themes Witt's consequential spiritual crisis of the mid-1880s and resulting gradual departure from the Church of Sweden Mission. The seventh chapter is a consideration of Witt's participation in and temporarily great impact on the Free East Africa Mission, a pan-Scandinavian free church undertaking which undertook evangelisation in both Durban and rural Natal in 1889. Chapter VIII treats Witt's generally independent career in Scandinavia from 1891 until his death, focusing on the new developments in which he became involved. The final chapter is an attempt to assess his general place in the missions and ecclesiastical history of Scandinavia and Southern Africa.

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PREFACE

This thesis is a study of Peter Otto Holger Witt, who opened the Church of Sweden Mission's field in Southern Africa during the late 1870s. It focuses on two overlapping aspects of his career and religious thought. The greater part is devoted to Witt's years as a missionary to the Zulus, first in the employ of the Church of Sweden Mission and later in affiliation with the Free East Africa Mission, a pan-Scandinavian, nondenominational organisation which existed from 1889 until 1899. Much of the thesis, however, is a tour of the spiritual road which Witt followed, beginning in the pietism of south-western Sweden to service in the strongly confessional Church of Sweden Mission and, after leaving the Lutheran tradition, through Christian perfectionism to Pentecostalism and pacifism.

Witt was an internationally oriented figure in the history of Christianity, and this study is accordingly intended for readers in more than one country. In the first instance, I have written for readers in South Africa. Because of this, I have included more background material on nineteenth-century Swedish church history than specialists in Sweden may deem necessary. Yet it is also intended for use in the latter country and elsewhere by readers unfamiliar with missions history in South Africa.

For the most part, I have employed internationally understandable academic conventions with regard to such technical matters as abbreviations and the forms of endnotes and biographical citations. These will presumably be self-explanatory to most readers. It should only be stressed that in deference to Swedish practice I have employed the abbreviation "SKM" (indicating *Svenska Kyrkans Mission*) in lieu of the more common "CSM" for the translated name Church of Sweden Mission.

I am deeply indebted to a relatively large number of other theologians and historians as well as to many archivists, librarians, and friends in four countries without whose assistance this modest *specimen eruditionis* could not have been completed. On my annual visits to South Africa I have made extensive use of the Natal Archives Depot and the library of the Natal Society in Pietermaritzburg, the Transvaal Archives Depot and the library of the University of South Africa in Pretoria, the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban, and the library of the University of Cape Town. In Sweden, I was

fortunate enough to be able to make great use of the Church of Sweden Mission Archives in Uppsala and the resources of the University of Uppsala Library between 1987 and 1990. In Norway I frequently employed relevant materials at the National Archives in Oslo, the archives of the Norwegian Mission Covenant in that city, the Norwegian Missionary Society in Stavanger, and the University of Oslo Library. My research also included countless visits to libraries in the United States of America, including those of the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Chicago, the University of Minnesota, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary. The personnel at all these institutions merit many words of gratitude for their competence, assistance, and almost unfailing courtesy. Friends and acquaintances in Pretoria, Irene, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Milnerton, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, Uppsala, Knivsta, Stavanger, Oslo, London, and Birmingham extended hospitality to me on dozens of occasions through the years. I owe a debt of gratitude to many missiologists and historians who have done research on Scandinavian missions in Southern Africa. Even though I must disagree with much of what they have written about Otto Witt, they nevertheless eased my task. Last not least, I wish to thank my promoter, Professor John W. de Gruchy, for his unfailing co-operation, patience, and flexibility in agreeing to take on the supervision of a project about which no South African, Swedish or otherwise, could be expected to have prior expertise.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A History of Neglect

Otto Witt might be called the metaphorical ghost of Swedish Lutheran missions history, a crucial figure in the early years of the Church of Sweden Mission who departed from that organisation but who dimly haunts the relatively little which has been written about it. There is considerable - if understandable - irony in this ambivalent role. On the one hand, Witt was the first missionary whom the Church of Sweden commissioned for its work in Southern Africa, and without question he played a highly significant part in both establishing that field beginning in 1876 and shaping its history until shortly before he left the SKM in 1890. He is thus an important figure not only in Swedish but also in Southern African church history. On the other hand, quite early in his career as a missionary Witt began to show signs of independence from hierarchical authority and gradual deviation from confessional Lutheranism. Both of these tendencies countered central emphases in the SKM, and both irritated the loyal adherents of that body who have been the guardians of its historiography, especially with regard to its field in Southern Africa. Given these fundamental facts, it is not surprising that there has been a tendency to pay scant attention to Witt and to reduce the man to simplified dimensions in the few scholarly and other treatments which have touched on him. This can also be said of his very minor role in the more general surveys of Swedish church history and Southern African missions history, relying as they have on specialised studies written early in the twentieth century.

The tradition of neglect within the SKM can be traced back at least as far as Witt's death in 1923. On that occasion one of his erstwhile colleagues in Natal, Hedvig Posse, contributed a brief obituary to *Svenska Kyrkans Missionstidning* (i.e. Church of Sweden Mission Times), the organ of the SKM. In it she promised readers a lengthier tribute to Witt in a subsequent issue.[1] One searches the pages of that journal in vain, however, for such a piece. It seems plausible that Witt's passing triggered

bitter memories of his resignation more than three decades earlier, and that rather than reviving the controversy surrounding the affair the editors of *Svenska Kyrkans Missionstidning* chose to ignore Witt's important if stormy contribution to the work of the SKM before 1890. In fairness to the leadership of the Mission, it should be stated that its titular head, Archbishop Nathan Söderblom (1866-1931), sent a letter of condolence to Witt's widow,[2] but apart from this Swedish Lutheranism maintained its silence on his passing, and he was buried outside the national denomination in which he had begun his career as a parish pastor and missionary nearly half a century earlier. Not until several decades later did Witt reappear in any noteworthy way in professional Swedish ecclesiastical historiography or missiology, and one can say without fear of exaggeration that he has never been given his due in it. This is all the more comprehensible because relatively little has been written about the general history of the work of the SKM, including that in Southern Africa.

Why Witt?

It is not difficult to develop a case for devoting more scholarly attention to Witt, and indeed one can cite at least four reasons for doing so. Perhaps most obviously, the mission field which he helped to establish soon evolved into a vital and relatively large one in which Swedish Lutherans brought Christian teachings and practice as well as secular education and humanitarian concern to the Zulus in a variety of ways. In order to understand the unfolding of this multifaceted ministry, it seems reasonable to investigate Witt's personal role in its establishment. In studying Witt, it soon becomes clear that he was a spiritually turbulent man, one whose religious thought and ways underwent major changes both during his years in Natal and after he returned to Sweden. An understanding of the early years of Swedish Lutheran missionary work amongst the Zulus requires some comprehension of these contours, which left their mark - albeit only temporarily - on that endeavour. Thirdly, Witt's career as a missionary in Southern Africa was not limited to his role in the Church of Sweden Mission. After his resignation from that body, and indeed beginning a few months before he submitted it, he played an almost equally influential part in the young

Free East Africa Mission, a little-known, pan-Scandinavian undertaking whose work in both urban and rural evangelism was limited to Natal. Although this organisation never became large and was absorbed into the Norwegian Mission Covenant in 1899, it merits some scholarly attention, partly because through it Witt was one of the first European missionaries to evangelise migratory Zulu labourers in Durban. Finally, Witt remained an evangelist for more than three decades after he returned to Sweden in 1891. During those years of generally itinerant proclamation of the Gospel, he continued to change theologically, and he made an impact on Scandinavian church history by stimulating the formation of a perfectionist denomination in Norway and by serving as one channel through which Pentecostalism was transmitted from that country to Sweden. Moreover, Witt wrote several books about pneumatology, ecclesiology, and Christian pacifism. Yet very little has hitherto been known about this productive period of his ministry, and even less has been published about it. That which exists is generally unreliable. To cite one glaring example of this, Walter J. Hollenweger, in his monumental study of Pentecostalism, cited Witt as an "example of a pastor who became a Pentecostal preacher" and declared that he was "a German pastor who came into contact with the Norwegian Pentecostal movement during the [First World] War".[3] In fact, despite his German name Witt was Swedish born and bred and is not known to have spent more than a few days on German soil during his entire lifetime. Moreover, he had demitted his status as an ordained pastor long before Pentecostalism reached Scandinavia, and he initially came into contact with it in 1907, not during the First World War. All of these turns in Witt's spiritual odyssey will be discussed in the lengthy penultimate chapter of the present study.

That Witt was a restless and spiritually unstable soul seems beyond dispute. He wandered for decades from one religious group to another and frequently changed his published theological views. Moreover, Witt embodied several unsavoury traits which affected both his personal behaviour and the people around him. As we shall see in this study, he sailed to Africa carrying racially condescending attitudes which were entirely inappropriate for a missionary, though widespread amongst his colleagues in the mission field, and he does not appear ever to have overcome them fully. His relations with fellow missionaries were often poor. At times Witt was dishonest, and at one point he was convicted and punished for threatening an African woman

with a firearm. He was, in short, hardly an exemplary missionary or clergyman. Yet he was a significant person in the history of missions in South Africa and the ecclesiastical history of Scandinavia. As such, Witt should not remain largely overlooked.

Previous Historiography

The historiography of Swedish Lutheranism in general mirrors this neglect. A brief consideration of a few relevant surveys will illustrate how the makers of this scholarly tradition have ignored Witt. We can begin with Carl Alfred Cornelius (1828-1893), who taught the subject in Uppsala and arguably did more to advance it in Sweden than did any other nineteenth-century figure. In the third edition of his *Handbok i Svenska Kyrkans historia* (i.e. Manual of the History of the Church of Sweden), published in 1892, he devoted approximately five pages to the development of the national denomination's programme of foreign missionary work. Cornelius mentioned briefly the founding of the SKM, its choice of Zululand as its first field, and the establishment of Oscarsberg as the initial station in 1878. He chose not to refer to Witt, however, possibly owing to the fact that the latter had left the SKM only two years previously.[4] Hjalmar Holmquist's history of Christianity in Sweden from ca 1840 until the First World War is woefully inadequate in its coverage of the development of foreign missions. Holmquist, who betrayed virtually no knowledge or appreciation of this branch of the subject, merely declared that the SKM was created in 1874.[5] Finally, in his convenient survey of Swedish church history, Berndt Gustafsson paid little attention to foreign missions and failed to mention Witt at all.[6]

Early in the twentieth century two Swedish Lutheran clergymen, both of whom were affiliated with the SKM, wrote histories of its endeavours in Southern Africa in which they discussed Witt briefly. The first of these amateur historians was Anton Karlgren (1861-1918), a scholarly pastor in Stockholm who took a keen interest in raising funds for missions and eventually served on the steering committee of the SKM. Commissioned by that body to chronicle its work in the African sub-

continent, he performed his task loyally and completed in 1909 a tome of over 500 pages. As one might expect, it contains a wealth of minutiae and gives readers a largely laudatory account of thirty-five years of evangelisation, institutional ministries, and other facets of Swedish Lutheran outreach to the Zulus and other African peoples. Karlgren did not completely ignore Witt, although the space he devoted to the man is indeed meagre and hardly does justice to his accomplishments or to the disputes in which he was frequently embroiled in Natal and elsewhere. Yet Karlgren's treatment of Witt is neither entirely unnuanced nor one-sided. Beyond mentioning the pioneer missionary objectively in comprehensive lists of the SKM's personnel in its Southern African field, he noted that Witt initially co-operated with Schreuder and learnt the Zulu language readily but soon fell out with his Norwegian mentor. Karlgren declared that both men were strong-willed, an assertion which the research of subsequent scholars has confirmed. He handled Witt's development of Oscarsberg quite dispassionately and described Witt's behaviour during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 more charitably than was necessary or, arguably, historiographically responsible. Less gingerly, Karlgren stated obliquely that "during missionary Witt's time the work at Oscarsberg suffered from a certain inconsistency" but did not explain what this involved or how it had affected the ministry at that station. More specifically, Karlgren noted that when Henry Tottie, an official of the SKM, visited its field in Natal in 1886 he discovered that Witt was allegedly baptising Zulu converts without preparing them adequately for membership in the church.[7] Entirely absent from the early history are a serious discussion of Witt's background and call to missionary work, his theology, his missionary strategy, his spiritual struggles, his troubled relations with some of his colleagues in the SKM and counterparts in other missionary societies, and his reasons for leaving the SKM and, subsequently, the Church of Sweden. Given the purpose of Karlgren's book, the absence of some of these crucial matters is understandable if not excusable.

Somewhat more illuminating, though still of relatively little historiographical value to the study of Witt, is Johan Erik Norenius' (1867-1934) popular history of the SKM's first half-century in Southern Africa. Writing while on furlough in Sweden and relying very heavily on the files of the Mission's periodical, he was able to shed more light on Witt, in whose career he seems to have been quite interested,

than the more cautious Karlgren had done. In all likelihood Norenius' experience as a missionary at several stations in Natal and the Transvaal, including Oscarsberg, piqued his curiosity about Witt, who had left Natal several years before his own arrival there but whom he may have met in Sweden. Be that as it may, Norenius devoted a few paragraphs to Witt's background in Sweden, journey to Natal, and period of *de facto* apprenticeship under the seasoned Norwegian missionary H.P.S. Schreuder. He also described how Witt had acquired a site for a station and founded Oscarsberg in 1878. Norenius was more critical of Witt's conduct during the Anglo-Zulu War than Karlgren had been and took the man to task both for leaving Natal on his own initiative and for making to the British press comments critical of European settlers in that colony. Those remarks, Norenius asserted obliquely, "hindered the work of the SKM for many years". On the other hand, Norenius gave him credit for rebuilding Oscarsberg after the war and establishing a children's home, a school, and a worshipping congregation at that station. In a less laudatory vein, he described Witt's resignation from the SKM and, quoting Witt, explained that disagreement with that organisation's confessional Lutheran theology had led to an irreconcilable breach.[8] The overall portrait of Witt which thus emerges is a mixed one, revealing but hardly explaining some of the complexity of this pioneer missionary. Apart from Witt's resignation, Norenius, like Karlgren, avoided most of the controversial matters which a more comprehensive treatment presumably would have covered. This was probably due in part to the fact that a more detailed study would have proven embarrassing to some of Witt's erstwhile colleagues who were still living in the mid-1920s. Beyond that, however, Norenius' description of Witt's involvement in the SKM illustrates the limits which reliance on published materials places on a study of this type. Had Norenius delved into the extensive and pertinent archivalia instead of merely extracting material from the periodicals of the SKM, he at least could have given readers a significantly more penetrating analysis of Witt. Whether he would have dared to do so or found it relevant to his purposes is, of course, questionable.

Karlgren and Norenius nevertheless laid a partial foundation for further studies of Witt, but for many years virtually no-one cared to build on it. Symptomatic of this neglect, J.M. Ollén devoted only part of one sentence to Witt in his multi-volume

survey of Swedish missions history,[9] and J.E. Lundahl referred to him no less briefly in his contribution to a symposium about Scandinavian missions history published in 1950.[10]

Detailed scholarly inquiry into the history of the SKM lay partly dormant for decades. One partial exception was an unannotated article by Helge Backman on brief co-operation between the SKM and the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission which involved Otto Witt.[11]

Not until the 1960s did it begin to rustle in a major way. In the process, there was some consideration of Otto Witt. In his generally excellent thesis on the birth and formative years of the SKM, arguably one of the most impressive products of Swedish missiology, Tore Furberg gave Witt much more attention than any scholar or other writer hitherto had done. Presumably, this was due in part to the obviously significant role which Witt played as its first missionary; Furberg's treatment of the man clearly did not spring from admiration of him. Much of what Furberg wrote about Witt's activities in Natal is accurate and presented in a reasonably sympathetic manner, however, probably moreso than some of the pertinent evidence warrants. None of Witt's derogatory remarks about Africans, for example, are reproduced, and there is nothing concerning his support of the British invasion of Zululand in 1879, even though Witt's comments in both regards make tantalising copy. Instead, by reading Furberg's study one acquires largely objective information about Witt, such as the fact that he initially served under Schreuder in an arrangement which was never satisfactorily defined and ended after approximately one year. Furberg then narrates how Witt and his colleagues purchased in 1878 a site near Rorke's Drift on the Buffalo River and established there the first SKM station. Throughout these early sections of his thesis, Furberg handles Witt with consistent fairness, even with regard to the termination of the agreement with Schreuder, which he ascribes to differences between the two men's personalities. He assesses Schreuder as having authoritarian and volitional tendencies and Witt as being too sensitive and not sufficiently willing to co-operate, characteristics which, though obviously not accounting for the entire personality of either man, are nonetheless undeniable and could have been documented.

Furberg's generally favourable portrait of Witt's missionary activity prior to the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 probably owes much to the fact that during that early stage of his career he fitted reasonably well Furberg's portrayal of the SKM as a confessionally orthodox body which obediently served the Church of Sweden under the leadership of Archbishop Anton Sundberg. From the time he applied to serve the SKM until the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War, Witt did virtually nothing to challenge the authority of his superiors and gave no indication that he questioned the confessional Lutheran underpinnings of the SKM. He was, in other words, entirely on the correct side in Furberg's perception of Swedish Lutheran foreign missions.[12]

At an early point in the 1879 war, however, Witt's station was destroyed in a fierce battle, and he consequently escorted his family back to Sweden without first obtaining from his superiors permission to leave the field. From then on Witt's image in Furberg's book is somewhat negative and, arguably, one-sided. Witt becomes increasingly a maverick who deviated from the coherent, hierarchical, orthodox Lutheran stature of the young SKM. Furberg notes that Witt soon crossed verbal swords with his two colleagues who remained in Natal and who excoriated him in newspapers in both Stockholm and Durban for ostensibly leaving their missionary endeavour in the lurch. This inherently distorts the picture of Witt, as Furberg makes no mention of the equally pertinent fact that the leaders of the SKM accepted his rationale for returning to Sweden during the war and sent him back to Natal with additional administrative authority after its conclusion. Furberg also remains silent on the eventual reconciliation of Witt and his colleagues, thereby leaving readers with the incorrect impression that the former remained incorrigibly at odds with them. Indeed, reading Furberg's study one can believe that at a very early stage, approximately a decade before Witt resigned from the SKM, he was already somewhat alienated from it and had become a bone in the throats of its leaders. But such was not the case, as indeed some of the material which Furberg presents in other contexts indicates. In fact, until fairly late in the 1880s, when he had clearly set a course which would lead him out of the SKM, Witt conducted his ministry chiefly along lines which few other people in that body would have found objectionable. Furberg, however, appears to have accepted uncritically a censorious evaluation of Witt which Henry William Tottie, an official of the SKM who had inspected its Southern African

field, wrote in 1887. That Witt by that time no longer marched entirely to the drumbeat of his superiors is beyond dispute. As will be shown in Chapters IV and VI, however, prior to 1888 or 1889 he was not nearly as far out of step with SKM policies as Furberg portrays him as being, despite showing clear signs of theological deviation from conventional Lutheranism. One suspects that Furberg saw him as a negative referent who countered much of the emphasis in the SKM from a relatively early stage and was thus almost poles apart from Tottie, other officials in the SKM, and his few colleagues in Natal. There is no compelling evidence, however, that such was the case. Instead, we shall seek to present a more nuanced analysis of Witt's gradual drift away from normative positions in the SKM.[13]

It will be shown that during the latter half of the 1880s Witt's theology underwent a metamorphosis following a spiritual crisis which he experienced in 1885. Furberg mentions but not attempt to analyse this crisis which played a key role in precipitating the subsequent theological development. Significantly, Furberg does not state that Witt's female colleague at Oscarsberg, Ida Jonatanson, who may have been influenced by one wing of neo-evangelism in Sweden or at least by its understanding of the assurance of salvation, helped him to overcome his spiritual *Anfechtung* by in effect encouraging him to give up what appears to have been an unarticulated version of the conventional pietistic *ordo salutis* and accept the orthodox Lutheran understanding of assurance of salvation independent of one's feelings or the stage one had reached in sanctification. This was probably a crucial turning point in the unfolding of Witt's spirituality, one to which we shall return in Chapter V. Instead of dealing with this, however, Furberg, in harmony with his thesis concerning the confessional emphasis of the SKM, stresses the importance of foreign, non-Lutheran influences in stimulating his transition. On the basis of uncharacteristically thin evidence, Furberg emphasises Witt's reading of generally unspecified British and American holiness literature and the supposedly "vital connections with missionaries from Anglo-Saxon Reformed circles" as the central factors which were steering his theological course by 1886. Millenarianism was also ostensibly determinative in Witt's theological understanding by that time: "His view of missions was shaped by apocalypticism and individualism; the important task was to save from perdition as many souls as possible, while there was still time".[14] Furberg thus gives the impression that by 1886 Witt had virtually

abandoned conventional missionary tasks at his station and become an itinerant evangelist fervently awaiting the imminent return of Christ rather than helping to establish permanent, indigenous churches.

What complicates a chronological analysis of Witt's spiritual odyssey during the 1880s and may have confused Furberg is the fact that by the end of that decade he had unquestionably given up institutional missionary work at Oscarsberg, become keenly interested in millenarianism, shown great interest in ambulatory proclamation of the Gospel, and begun to co-operate closely with other missionaries who were heavily indebted to recent British and American theological currents, though not necessarily holiness movements. Furberg appears to believe that this transition in Witt's religious thought and ministry had been essentially made by 1886, when Tottie inspected the field, though curiously enough he later identified the renowned Dutch Reformed pastor Andrew Murray, whom Witt heard only in 1887, as the principal human agent in bringing about this change.[15] The difficulty in attributing such significance to Murray will be discussed in Chapter VI.

Furberg's description of Witt's relationship to educational work as a component of the missionary endeavour also underscores the danger of uncritical reliance on one tendentious source. There is no question that Furberg saw Witt's educational ministry - or alleged neglect of the same - through Tottie's eyes. An ecclesiastical historian at the University of Uppsala, Tottie valued educational work highly and feared that the interest Witt had begun to take in evangelism away from Oscarsberg - in harmony with the extramural activities of many other missionaries in Southern Africa during the nineteenth century - jeopardised the educational programme at the station, which he believed should remain a central pillar of the SKM's work there. Furberg devotes several pages to Tottie's inspection and a summary of his critical report.[16] Yet other sources indicate that some of the alarmed Swedish docent's fears were unfounded and that he had caricatured Witt to some extent. As will be demonstrated in Chapter VI, colonial educational inspectors annually wrote favourable reports about the school at Oscarsberg, and if Witt's own reports of his activities are ingenuous he continued to devote much of his time to endeavours at that station - despite occasional evangelising forays into the surrounding area of Natal and across the Buffalo River into Zululand - until 1888 or 1889.

Furberg relates how in 1889 Witt became associated with the Free East Africa Mission and continued to serve it for two years. In the meantime he resigned from the SKM in February 1890. Furberg's narration of this segment of Witt's missionary career is generally accurate, although in places it suffers from the assumption that it was simply a continuation of a pattern supposedly established several years earlier. To cite but two examples of this, Furberg declares that while assisting the FEAM Witt, ostensibly long a devoté of itinerant evangelism, opposed the founding of any station. In fact, he played an instrumental role in establishing Ekutandaneni near Stanger, which served as the FEAM's principal station. Secondly, in describing Witt's relations with nonconformist denominations in Sweden and how some of their members made contributions to the FEAM, Furberg asserts that Witt's greatest support came from the Holiness Union, a young body which emphasised *inter alia* personal sanctification. His only evidence for this claim, however, consists of two letters from Witt which were published in that denomination's periodical and do not address the question of the amount of financial aid which he received from various religious bodies in Sweden.[17]

Again, it should be emphasised that Furberg's study of the early years of the SKM is generally of a very high standard and rests on research which is extensive, though in the case of Witt not entirely adequate. It should also be borne in mind, however, that Furberg's thesis assesses primarily the confessional character of the SKM and that he deals with Witt as a negative referent who deviated from its orthodox path. Nowhere does this become more apparent than in his description of Witt's encounter with Tottie, a hero of the book who acted decisively to hold the SKM firmly on its confessional course. That Furberg chose to deal with Witt primarily in terms of his position relative to that orthodox course is thus understandable, although this approach leaves much of the first SKM missionary's story untold.

An intimately related problem in Furberg's method of describing Witt is his apparent assumption that the latter was once a truly confessional Lutheran - as indeed one might expect a theological graduate of the University of Lund in the 1870s to have been - and that the changes which both his religious thought and missionary activity underwent after 1885 must be attributed to non-Lutheran influences. A fiendishly difficult question which this raises, but which Furberg makes no attempt to answer,

is whether one root of Witt's increasingly evident theological subjectivity lay in the pietistic soil of south-western Sweden where he was raised before matriculating in Lund. As will be seen in the present study, there is some evidence (though admittedly not a great deal) of pietistic tendencies of various kinds in Witt's thought at several stages of his life, both before and after the crucial year 1885. One must wonder whether he was ever a fully appropriate representative of a confessionally orthodox body like the SKM.

Turning to histories of Southern African and general African missions written by scholars other than Swedes, one finds only occasional reference to Witt. In his classic survey, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa*, Johan du Plessis identified him as "the first missionary to represent the Swedish Church in this land" and stated that for "a time" he "was connected with Bishop Schreuder's mission" but provided no other information about Witt.[18] In her popular but unreliable *The Planting of the Churches in South Africa*, Jane M. Sales limited her consideration of the SKM to a sentence in which she declared, "During the last [sic] half of the nineteenth century, the Church of Sweden also undertook mission work in Natal and Zululand".[19] Relying on du Plessis, C.P. Groves mentioned in his monumental, multi-volume study of *The Planting of Christianity in Africa* that Witt was the first SKM representative in "South Africa", that he was initially associated with Schreuder and founded Oscarsberg in 1878, and that the SKM did not penetrate Zululand for another decade.[20] In his brief description of Lutheran missionary work in Natal during the nineteenth century, Peter Falk included paragraphs about German and Norwegian missionaries of that tradition but failed to mention their Swedish counterparts.[21] Finally, Kenneth Scott Latourette presented the history of the SKM's Southern African field in a paragraph. Witt is not mentioned by name therein; Latourette merely states that "its first representative in South Africa arrived in 1876 or 1877 and at the outset was associated with Schreuder".[22]

Since Witt's place in such survey literature and monographic studies is small to invisible, it is not surprising that he does not appear in most of the pertinent reference works. No Swedish encyclopaedia or biographical lexicon has ever carried an article about him, although his Norwegian counterpart Schreuder is no stranger

to Swedish reference works. By the same token, the *Lutheran Encyclopedia* contains an article about Schreuder but none about Witt.

Witt did not appear in the *Dictionary of South African Biography* until the fifth volume of that generally respectable series was published. Though written by the eminent Swedish missiologist Axel Ivar Berglund (who, however, approached his subject without particular expertise on him), the brief article about him there is far from dependable. Relying too heavily on secondary works, Berglund uncritically reproduced numerous errors in them and ventured out on thin ice beyond the secure scope of his own research in relating aspects of Witt's life and career which had been either cursorily treated or entirely ignored in the previous literature. A few key examples will illustrate the resulting weaknesses. Berglund read that as a young man Witt considered emigrating from Sweden to the United States of America, but he mistakenly placed this after his ordination in 1874 and attributed it to Witt's alleged belief that his theological education had been insufficient for the challenged he faced in the parish ministry. In fact it was during his student days at the University of Lund that he entertained the possibility of becoming a pastor amongst Swedish-Americans, and his father, a clergyman in the Church of Sweden, even corresponded with the president of the Augustana Synod in that regard. Another chronological inexactitude related to Witt's initial departure from Sweden for the mission field in Natal, which Berglund asserts took place in 1875. In fact Witt sailed away from his native land only in February 1876. Moreover, his first colleague in Natal, Carl Ludvig Flygare, did not arrive in Southern Africa a year after Witt disembarked there, as Berglund states, but had begun to serve the Hermannsburg Missionary Society in that colony during the late 1860s. Regarding the establishment of the first Swedish Lutheran station in Natal, Berglund declares that the leadership of the Church of Sweden Mission authorised Witt and two colleagues to procure a site in June 1877 and that they bought a farm from James Rorke the following January. That is quite impossible, for Rorke had died in 1875. Instead, these missionaries purchased land from a settler named Robert Surtees, though near Rorke's Drift on the Buffalo River. At the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War in January 1879 Witt did not send his wife and children to the presumed safety of Pietermaritzburg, as Berglund states, but rather to Gordon Memorial, a Scottish mission station quite near his own. Jumping

ahead to the last two years of Witt's career as a missionary in Africa, Berglund places his resignation from the Church of Sweden Mission in April 1890, but it was then that the resignation, which Witt had submitted months earlier, was finally accepted. Berglund ascribes this departure to Witt's acquaintance with two Norwegian "free-lance" missionaries named "Wettergren", the "self-proclaimed leader" of whose group he became. In fact Jacob and Olaf Wettergreen (as their surname was correctly spelt) were firmly attached to the Free East Africa Mission, as were seven other men and women who sailed with them to Natal in 1889. Witt was never their self-proclaimed leader; Olaf Wettergreen headed this small band, whom Witt assisted in various ways. Regarding Witt's civil status, Berglund states only that he married Elin Pallin in 1875 and had five children. In fact he was the father of six sons and daughters by 1891 and, following the death of his first wife, remarried in Sweden. It is true that Witt became a Pentecostal late in life, but there is no evidence to support Berglund's categorical generalisation that he became "ever more unconventional in approach until his death".[23] In fairness to Berglund, it should be emphasised that several of his statements are correct and some of his interpretations are defensible. Yet his two columns about Witt underscore the need for detailed, scholarly research on this pioneering missionary.

One could belabour the point, but multiplying examples still further would merely confirm that apart from Furberg's thesis there has never been a scholarly study which dealt seriously with Witt. The existing references to him in general surveys are brief, unanalytical, and generally derivative. Clearly the time for a fresh and nuanced portrayal of the first SKM missionary, resting on extensive archival and other research, and unencumbered by partiality in the many disputes in which he was involved, is at hand.

With regard to Witt's ministerial career in Scandinavia after he left Natal in 1891, extremely little has been written. In G.E. Söderholm's standard but very dated history of the first two decades of the Swedish Pentecostal movement, for example, with which Witt was briefly associated, Witt, it discussed in a few lines. Söderholm gave no indication of his sources, however, and he provided neither dates nor other significant information about Witt's involvement with Pentecostalism.[24] In none of the other literature of Scandinavian free church history does Witt play any notable

role. The last thirty-three years of his life, in other words, are virtually a blank page in the annals of Scandinavian ecclesiastical historiography.

Structure

The structure of the present study is essentially chronological and intended to give readers in South Africa, Scandinavia, and elsewhere an intellectually palatable and easy to follow presentation of Witt's career and religious thought. Following the Introduction, Chapter II consists of three general parts, namely a synopsis of the history of the Swedish Lutheran background from which Witt came and the origins of the SKM, a brief consideration of his formative years in south-western Sweden, and a lengthier treatment of his initial journey to Natal and his first two and a half years as a missionary in Natal and Zululand, culminating in the establishment of the Oscarsberg station near Rorke's Drift in 1878. Chapter III deals in detail with Witt's controversial activities during a pivotal era in his missionary career and indeed in that of missions to the Zulus generally, namely that of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. In it I pay considerable attention to Witt's place in the celebrated battle in which his station was destroyed and seek to correct numerous errors in the pertinent historiography. I also consider the rupture of relations between Witt and his colleagues during the war, his controversial remarks in England in March 1879 and the debates both there and in Natal which they precipitated, and his activities in Sweden during the balance of the hostilities and for several months thereafter. Chapter IV covers Witt's role in re-establishing Oscarsberg after the war, the development of various kinds of missionary work at that station, Witt's reconciliation with his estranged colleagues, and attempts to expand the SKM field into Zululand. A central theme of this chapter is that during the first half of the 1880s Witt co-operated harmoniously with his superiors and played a vital role not only in contributing to the realisation of their plans for enhancing the SKM's endeavours both at Oscarsberg and elsewhere, but also that he was a creative missionary who conceived many ideas for the unfolding of this work. In Chapter V the emphasis shifts from Witt's actions to the spiritual crisis which he endured in 1885 and which

was one of the factors which pushed him away from Lutheran confessionalism and, eventually, led to his resignation from the SKM. I pay some attention to the immediate consequences of this crisis for his missionary strategy. During the latter half of the 1880s, Witt gradually drifted away from his hitherto strict obedience to his superiors and pursued increasingly ambulatory evangelism on both sides of the Buffalo River. This crucial phase is the subject of Chapter VI. It will be shown that despite his dissatisfaction with certain SKM policies and emphases, Witt continued to serve loyally and largely along conventional lines until quite late in the 1880s, despite testimony to the contrary which an alarmed Henry William Tottie filed in 1887. In connection with this, I seek to assess what influence, if any, Andrew Murray had on him during that year. Shortly before formally leaving the SKM in February 1890, Witt began to co-operate unofficially with the personnel of the Free East Africa Mission, who arrived in Durban in August 1889. He eventually became one of their *de facto* leaders and guided their endeavours until he returned to Sweden in 1891. This phase of his career is the subject of Chapter VII, which is also intended to introduce readers to the little-known FEAM. Chapter VIII deals with Witt's ministry as an itinerant evangelist in Sweden and Norway from 1891 until the early 1920s. In it I not only describe his activities during this period, especially as they related to the coming of Pentecostalism and Christian perfectionism to Scandinavia, but also trace the ongoing evolution of his religious thought by analysing briefly his books and articles on such subjects as millenarianism, pacifism, and ecclesiology during these final three decades of his life. My conclusions about Witt's significance are presented in Chapter IX.

Sources

The research for this study has involved the investigation of a relatively large amount of manuscript and published material. These sources vary greatly, not only in variety but also in their reliability as historical evidence. Indeed, much of the pertinent material frequently serves as a reminder that even manuscript sources are imperfect signposts on the road to historical truth. When dealing with a controversial

figure like Witt, who was often at odds with his colleagues in the SKM and with both Lutherans and other Christians in Sweden and Norway after his return from Natal in 1891, it must be borne in mind that neither he nor his antagonists sought to write dispassionately about their differences. Instead, all concerned had axes to grind. Personal reputations, careers as missionaries and evangelists, and the course of the SKM's young field in Southern Africa were all at stake. Intentionally or otherwise, both Witt and others consequently wrote to motivate, defend, and persuade, not to provide objective material for perusal by subsequent church historians. Tendentiousness, in short, characterises much of the stuff on which an investigation of the life of Witt must rest, and the cautious scholar must dig into it with a discerning spade. With this caveat in mind, we can survey the most significant clusters of sources.

The rich archives of the Church of Sweden Mission in Uppsala include the largest cache of relevant documents. These collections encompass dozens of letters and reports which Witt and his colleagues in Natal sent to their superiors in Sweden, protocols of the meetings of the SKM's steering committee, and miscellaneous other manuscripts, such as Witt's application to serve as a missionary, which includes a transcript of his record at the University of Lund and testimonials by some of his professors there. The archives also contain letters by Anglican missionaries in Zululand with whom Witt clashed in the late 1880s, lucid examples of the tendentiousness discussed above.

Other manuscripts from Witt's hand or relating to him are housed in the Natal Archives Depot in Pietermaritzburg. These are largely factual correspondence between him and colonial authorities or reports by inspectors of educational work amongst indigenes in Natal, in which Witt was involved for several years. There is no compelling reason to question the essential veracity of these documents, which in the main can be taken at face value. Finally, the Manuscripts Department at the University of Uppsala Library holds a small number of letters which Witt sent to the leader of a students' missionary society at that institution.

In addition to unpublished archival materials, there is a large amount of published correspondence, chiefly letters which Witt and his colleagues sent to the leaders of the SKM or the editors of its monthly journal, *Missions-Tidning*, and which were printed to stimulate and maintain the interest of Swedes who supported their endeavours

in Natal. Unlike countless letters which appeared in North American, British, and German missionary periodicals during the nineteenth century, this correspondence betrays little evidence of editorial tampering and can thus be used critically as an invaluable supplementary source. Discussions of many topics which few if any editors would have allowed to be printed during the latter half of the twentieth century, such as undeniably racist comments about indigenous African peoples, were thus blithely placed before the eyes of Swedish readers. The editor of *Missionæren* (i.e. The Missionary), the unofficial Norwegian organ of the Free East Africa Mission, performed a similar service for both readers in Norway and, in effect, subsequent historians. Witt also sent letters to Scandinavian-American periodicals, such as *Chicago-Bladet* (i.e. The Chicago Paper) and *Evangelisten* (i.e. The Evangelist), which served the Swedish and Dano-Norwegian antecedents, respectively, of what evolved into the Evangelical Free Church of America. Again, this segment of his correspondence can be regarded as generally reliable.

It should be noted, of course, that while the editors of these journals were willing to publish what in retrospect is partly controversial material, their purpose was not to serve historical enquiry but to provide favourable publicity for the missionary work in question. Consequently, they withheld from readers most references to such matters as questionable theological positions on the part of their missionaries in the field, disputes between Witt and his colleagues, and Witt's frequent complaints about being paid less than counterparts in certain other missions received. For information about such sensitive issues, one must generally turn to archival manuscripts, which in Witt's case often tell much more than his sometimes authoritarian superiors clearly wanted their supporters to know.

Secular newspapers in Sweden, Natal, and Great Britain also shed light on Witt, especially with regard to the controversies in which he became embroiled during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. Their use, however, poses critical problems. First, the reporters who interviewed Witt in England and Sweden did not have first-hand familiarity with that conflagration or either the colony of Natal or the Kingdom of Zululand in which it took place. Secondly, as will be shown in Chapter III, Witt clearly embellished his account of the battles which took place at his station near Rorke's Drift and at Isandhlwana across the Buffalo River. Uncritical acceptance

of what he disingenuously told the British public thus gives a distorted picture of historical facts which are known from other sources. Fortunately, newspapers in both England and Natal subsequently carried letters from numerous readers who challenged Witt's account. In ways other than those anticipated, therefore, such journalistic material contributes to the study of this controversial Swede.

Curiously, one of the weakest and least reliable printed sources is Witt's autobiography, if that his loosely written memoirs may be called. This book, which he published privately in 1922, does not begin to meet the standards of historical accuracy which were then set in Swedish academic circles, and even as popular literature of the sort intended to stimulate interest in missions it is poor. The work is sketchy to an extreme, and, written more than a half-century after some of the events which Witt describes, it betrays no effort on his part to corroborate his memory through the use of other sources. Like many of Witt's other writings, it is quite tendentious, although he skirted most of the issues in which he was involved and which might be of interest to serious readers. Moreover, Witt inexplicably ended the narrative with his return to Sweden in 1891, thereby failing to deal with his three decades of tortuous spiritual wandering and occasional controversy in Scandinavia after that decade. It is arguably Witt's poorest book, and to anyone pursuing research on the man it is probably also the most frustrating. In the present study I have therefore used it cautiously, drawing on it only in a few instances for information unobtainable from more reliable sources. Unfortunately, one of the matters for which Witt's memoirs must serve as the principal source is a vital one, namely his spiritual crisis of the mid-1880s.

Witt's other volumes, most of them popular theological treatises, are also weak when read with scholarly eyes. These books, published between 1887 and 1915, are nevertheless of considerable historiographical value. Indeed, the general lack of editing and the unembellished reasoning allows the careful reader to penetrate Witt's mind more readily than might otherwise be the case. It is thus quite easy to follow the general development of his late religious thought, even though it was inconsistent and never evolved to a high degree.

Collectively, this relatively broad spectrum of archival and published sources sheds a surprisingly large amount of light on many facets of this once obscure

missionary. Yet by their very nature they leave unilluminated many corners of the man's work and thought which will probably always remain dark. Some of these *lacunae* are common in missions history in general. Among the most glaring concerns African perceptions of Witt. How Zulus in Natal and Zululand saw the first Swede to proclaim the Gospel in their midst cannot really be known. Prior to Witt's departure from Southern Africa, the SKM had very few indigenous evangelists in its service, and the little which they recorded is of scant help in this regard. Other evidence, such as the testimonials of other Scandinavian missionaries who heard Witt preach at his station, in Durban, or elsewhere, does little more than indicate that he succeeded in retaining the attention of his auditors. In brief, because of the overwhelmingly white colour of the sources, in some respects this study necessarily reflects the limitations of conventional missions historiography.

Notes

1. Hedvig Posse, "Meddelanden från vårt arbete", *Svenska Kyrkans Missionstidning*, XLVIII, no. 18 (15 September 1923), p. 270.

2. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 41, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1923*, Eva Witt (Östhammar) to Nathan Söderblom, 9 September 1923.

3. Walter J. Hollenweger, *Enthusiastisches Christentum. Die Pfingstbewegung in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Wuppertal, Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus, and Zürich, Zwingli Verlag, 1969), p. 549.

4. C.A. Cornelius, *Handbok i Svenska Kyrkans historia*. 3rd ed. (Uppsala, W. Schultz, 1892), pp. 390-395.

5. Hjalmar Holmquist, *Handbok i svensk kyrkohistoria*. III. *Från romantiken till världskriget* (Stockholm, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1941), p. 67.

6. Berndt Gustafsson, *Svensk kyrkohistoria* (Stockholm, Verbum, 1957).

7. Anton Karlgren, *Svenska Kyrkans mission i Sydafrika* (Uppsala, L. Norblads Bokhandel, 1909), pp. 132, 134-135, 144-145, 149-150, 209.

8. J.E. Norenius, *Bland zuluer och karanger*. I (Stockholm, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1924), pp. 59-60, 62, 75-80, 82, 84-85, 126, 128.

9. J.M. Ollén, *Svenska missionsbragder*. II. *Indien och Sydafrika* (Stockholm, Svenska Missionsförbundets Förlag, 1920), p. 334.

10. J.E. Lundahl, "Sveriges ytre mission", in Knut B. Westman, *et al.*, *Nordisk misjonshistorie* (Oslo, Ansgar Forlag, 1950), p. 343.

11. Helge P:son Backman, "Ett svenskt-norskt samarbete. Förbindelserna mellan Svenska kyrkans mission och biskop Schreuder", *Svensk Missionstidskrift*, XXXV (1947), pp. 5-24.

12. Tore Furberg, *Kyrka och mission i Sverige 1868-1901* (Uppsala, Svenska Institutet för Missionsforskning, 1962), pp. 132-134.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 155, 158-159.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 448.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 266-269.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 285.

18. J. du Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), p. 385.

19. Jane M. Sales, *The Planting of the Churches in South Africa* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 114.

20. C.P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa. II. 1840-1878* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1954), p. 265.

21. Peter Falk, *The Growth of the Church in Africa* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), pp. 173-174.

22. Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity. V. The Great Century in the Americas, Australasia, and Africa A.D. 1800 - A.D. 1914* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1943), pp. 370-371.

23. A.I. Berglund, "Witt, Peter Otto Holger", in *Dictionary of South African Biography*, V (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, 1987), pp. 894-895.

24. G.E. Söderholm, *Den svenska pingstväckelsens historia 1907-1927* (Stockholm, Förlaget Filadelfia, 1928), p. 450.

CHAPTER II

WITT'S BACKGROUND AND CALL TO THE MISSION FIELD

Swedish Lutheranism in the Nineteenth Century

Witt's career as a missionary in Southern Africa was played out before the backdrop of the nineteenth-century Swedish Lutheranism in which he had been raised and educated. Moreover, his gradual odyssey away from the normative centre of that religious tradition was partly a reaction to developments within it, an evolution which generally proceeded in a confessional Lutheran direction. Without reference to this changing background, a study of Witt would be little more than an isolated curiosity removed from much of its historical context. It is thus essential to examine, albeit briefly, the most salient and historically significant features of and transitions in Swedish religious life during the nineteenth century. This was a period of profound religious transition and, although some of the key developments occurred only after Witt initially left Sweden in 1876, even they are crucial for understanding the spiritual milieu in which he conducted his ministry in Natal until 1891 and in Scandinavia for more than thirty years thereafter.

Throughout this period the Church of Sweden remained the normative religious institution in Witt's native land. Established in a lengthy process which began in the 1520s, the Swedish Lutheran church became one of the most deeply entrenched religious institutions in Protestant Europe. From its Roman Catholic heritage it inherited an episcopal hierarchy at whose summit stood the Archbishop of Uppsala. Most of its pastors received their theological education at the universities of Uppsala or Lund. Socially they were a privileged lot whose standard of living loomed far above that of most of their parishioners until well into the twentieth century. Within the church the clergy long were generally unchallenged in the exercising of the pastoral office. A "Conventicles Edict" promulgated in 1726 forbade the laity from holding private services of the sort which frequently accompanied pietism. It was abrogated in 1858, thereby opening the door to more lay initiative. Royal decrees dating from the age of absolutism also commanded parents to submit their children for baptism

in the Church of Sweden and compelled those thus entered in the parish rolls to be confirmed. For centuries, moreover, there was no legal means of cancelling one's birthright membership in the national religious establishment. The system, in short, was a comprehensive, involuntary people's church in which most of the people were followers and not particularly active participants.

Within this seeming monolith, however, there was an increasing amount of religious and theological variety during the nineteenth century. This was due in large measure to the proliferation of lay movements in the Church of Sweden. One major root of this general development lay in eighteenth-century pietism and the willingness of some of its adherents to flout the Conventicles Edict, which in any case proved difficult to enforce. A few of the movements which they led eventually separated from the established church, and in general this development in Swedish Lutheranism arguably prepared the way for the advent of denominational pluralism during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Yet most of the neo-pietists remained loyal to the Church of Sweden at that time and, by staying in it, clearly gave the religious establishment more variety and vitality than it otherwise would have had. A few examples will illustrate the point and show the historical contours of this broad development.

It should be borne in mind that these movements took place in a society which was undergoing fairly rapid social change. During the first half of the nineteenth century poverty was widespread in Sweden, where the economy failed to produce nearly enough jobs to support a steadily increasing population. Moreover, illiteracy and marginal literacy were still fairly widespread at that time. A law of 1842 provided for the establishment of a primary school in every parish, however, a move which eventually led to nearly universal literacy. This was particularly significant in that it made the Bible and a profusion of devotional literature available to hundreds of thousands of Swedes who previously had little or no opportunity to read religious materials. Moreover, after mid-century the Industrial Revolution gradually came to Sweden. It provided some measure of upward social mobility and, through progressing urbanisation and more effective means of communication, made cross-fertilisation of religious ideas and currents easier than had been the case when most of the people were in effect restricted to their respective rural areas. The Industrial

Revolution did not, however, solve the interlocking problems of overpopulation and poverty. Swedish emigration, chiefly to North America but also to such more remote areas as Southern Africa and Australia, consequently remained heavy for decades and crested during the 1880s.

To be sure, some of the lay pietist movements antedated these social upheavals. One such group comprised principally lay people but also included a small number of pastors in northern Sweden. During the first decade of the nineteenth century they studied several works by Martin Luther and other writers. An increase in the amount of illegal lay preaching was one obvious result of the spiritual discoveries they made as their regional awakening spread from one parish to another. This soon prompted a harsh response from ecclesiastical and judicial authorities who sought to suppress this challenge to clerical prerogative. The movement persisted for decades, however, and in Luleå it led to a *de facto* separation from the established church when some lay leaders began to celebrate the Lord's Supper in conventicles and baptise their own children. Shortly after mid-century, though, the movement lost much of its impetus.[1]

Of much more widespread and lasting importance were the developments collectively known in Swedish ecclesiastical historiography as *nyevangelism* (i.e. neo-evangelism). In brief, this was a broad, almost epoch-making movement during the latter half of the nineteenth century which brought a powerful new dimension to pietism in Sweden by re-emphasising the centrality of justification and the Atonement, whereas earlier pietism had tended to stress sanctification and personal morality, matters which the neo-evangelists did not entirely overlook.

No Swede played a greater role in encouraging and nurturing this development than Carl Olof Rosenius (1816-1868). A native of northern Sweden and the son of a pastor who had been active in neo-pietist movements, Rosenius studied theology in Uppsala but did not receive a degree and was never ordained. Instead, after enduring an intense spiritual crisis he came under the influence of George Scott (1804-1874), a Scottish Methodist who was then conducting a ministry in Stockholm. Rosenius soon became his assistant and, when a hostile mob forced Scott to leave the country in 1842, Rosenius became the leader of an awakening which spread from Stockholm through several parts of Sweden. Much of the influence which he exercised on this

was through *Pietisten* (i.e. The Pietist), a monthly periodical which he edited and to which he contributed heavily. Rosenius also preached widely in Sweden. He encouraged other itinerant lay preachers to disregard legal restrictions on their activities, and he organised Sunday schools on the British model which was then gaining international popularity. Another channel for the proliferation of the awakening which he helped to develop was the use of colporteurs to distribute Christian literature to the increasingly literate populace. Many of these men combined that function with lay preaching.[2]

Through these and other means neo-evangelism became a powerful and pervasive movement within the Church of Sweden, one whose greatest impact was on the laity in several parts of the country. It did not, however, supplant all other religious movements, especially in southern Sweden. As the eminent Swedish church historian Hjalmar Holmquist asserted, "in those areas where church-centred revivals had already established firm piety and imparted knowledge [of the Gospel], the neo-evangelical movement failed to gain a foothold". He believed this was particularly the case where Lutheran clergymen who stood in the pietistic tradition of Henric Schartau (1757-1825) had imbued their congregations with this legacy.[3] As we shall see later in the present chapter, Otto Witt spent his formative years in south-western Sweden where the Schartau tradition was still strong in many parishes of the established church. It is thus questionable whether Rosenius exercised any significant influence on Witt in a direct way. It will be argued in Chapter V, however, that when Witt suffered an intense spiritual crisis in Natal during the mid-1880s he believed he found the solution to it in the immediate salvation which many neo-evangelicals proclaimed.

Much of the organisational structure for this broad awakening came in 1856 when Hans Jacob Lundborg (1825-1867), a young pastor who had recently studied the religious scene in Scotland and found there much to be emulated, Rosenius, and other leaders founded in Stockholm what soon became known as the *Evangeliska fosterlandsstiftelse* (i.e. The Evangelical National Foundation). Initially its activities consisted mainly of distributing devotional literature and some of Martin Luther's works. The Foundation soon became one of the most prominent promoters of itinerant lay preaching, however, and it established in the Swedish capital an institution for training these men. In 1865 it launched a programme of foreign missionary work

by commissioning its first missionaries to East Africa. By the time Witt entered the ministry of the Church of Sweden in 1874, the Foundation was a major voluntary organisation in its service and an increasingly influential force in popular religious life.

While the Swedish laity was beginning to play a more active role in leading spiritual life, and partly as a reaction to this development, confessional Lutheran theology was reasserting itself in the Church of Sweden. Conservatives became alarmed when laymen preached the Gospel and, on occasion, administered the sacraments without being "properly called" (*rite vocatus*) in accordance with Article XIV of the *Augsburg Confession*. Some therefore insisted that the laws which forbade this challenge to their prerogative be more strictly enforced. Even without such a reaction, however, it is probable that the pendulum of Swedish Lutheran theology would have begun to swing back towards orthodoxy by the middle of the nineteenth century, as *Repristination* theology, or a reassertion of Lutheran orthodoxy, came from conservative circles in Germany to all the Scandinavian lands with varying degrees of influence.

In Sweden the theological faculty at the University of Lund became the principal centre of this conservative reaction. The professors there, who educated the majority of the ordinands in the established church, advocated strongly what they believed was a sorely needed return to Lutheran confessionalism. Amongst the most prominent of these men were Anton Niklas Sundberg (1818-1900), who subsequently became Archbishop of Uppsala and *ex officio* head of the Church of Sweden Mission, Ebbe Gustaf Bring (1814-1884), and Hans Magnus Melin (1805-1877). These theologians and their like-minded colleagues defended what is internationally - and especially in English-speaking Christian circles - known as "high church" ecclesiology. They stressed the importance of the office of ministry as opposed to contemporary trends towards lay initiative in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Against the advent of nonconformist denominations in Sweden (to which we shall turn shortly), they emphasised their belief that the national Lutheran tradition alone should be fully tolerated. And in opposition to liberal theological currents, especially after the middle of the nineteenth century, the Lundensians demanded adherence to orthodox Lutheranism. Some, it might be added, also opposed the evolution of political liberalism in Sweden. It was at the feet of these generally

conservative Lutheran theologians that Otto Witt studied for the ministry during the late 1860s and early 1870s.

Another strong current in Swedish Lutheranism during Witt's formative years was the so-called "evangelicalism" associated particularly with such people as Peter Fjellstedt (1802-1881). By all accounts, this erstwhile missionary played a seminal role in shaping both popular religiosity and nurturing interest in foreign missions for a period of more than three decades. A carpenter's son from Värmland, he studied theology at the University of Lund during the 1820s and, following his ordination in 1828, spent three years in Basel preparing for foreign service. Beginning in 1831 Fjellstedt served the Anglican Church Missionary Society in India. He subsequently proclaimed the Gospel in Smyrna, Asia Minor, from 1834 until 1840. Following three years as an itinerant representative of the Basel Missionary Society in Switzerland, France, and Germany, Fjellstedt returned to Sweden in 1843 and promoted the growing foreign missionary cause in various ways until the 1870s. He was one of the organisers of the Lund Missionary Society in 1845, edited its periodical beginning in 1846, and became the head of its new training institute for missionaries in 1847. Fjellstedt travelled extensively throughout Sweden, urging Christians to support foreign missions and proclaiming an explicitly Biblically based faith. He also exercised influence through his writings, particularly his immensely popular series *Biblia, det är all den heliga skrift, med förklaringer* (i.e. The Bible, The Entire Holy Scriptures, with Explanations), which was published between 1849 and 1856 and repeatedly reissued.[4] Fjellstedt was a loyal son of the Church of Swweden and had a high regard for that formal institution, yet his own ecclesiology reflected the influence of the "low-church" or "evangelical" wing of the Church of England and was thus different from the "high-church" emphases which were leaving their mark on Lund. Biblicism and a keen interest in foreign missions thus went hand-in-hand in this stream of nineteenth-century Swedish Lutheranism. Eventually a millenarian strain also became significant in it as well, especially after 1880.

As influential as the Lundensian conservatives were in Swedish Lutheran theology and ecclesiastical affairs for decades, they never had a monopoly on religious thought in the Church of Sweden. Neither did the low-church "evangelicals" whom Fjellstedt inspired. Beginning at least as early as the 1840s, theological liberalism explicitly

challenged the confessional reaction. There were not many prominent liberal theologians in mid-nineteenth-century Sweden, but they were sufficiently vocal to alarm the defenders of orthodoxy. In the ranks of the clergy, the most well-known was probably Nils Ignell (1806-1864). After initially being hindered from receiving a clerical position because of his theological views, he was named assistant pastor at a parish in Stockholm in 1844. For the next two decades Ignell advanced liberal theology chiefly through his writings. He popularised the thinking of David Friedrich Strauß, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and other continental theologians in Sweden. Owing partly to their influence, Ignell stressed the centrality of the Kingdom of God on earth - defined largely in Christian ethical terms - as the focal point of his proclamation of the Gospel, which otherwise lacked or paid little attention to many conventional Lutheran doctrines. It is difficult to gauge the extent of Ignell's influence of the Swedish laity, but in any case it appears to have extended well beyond his own congregation, partly because he contributed essays frequently to the liberal press.

Viktor Rydberg (1828-1895) probably played the greatest role in bringing liberal theology to the laity. Not formally theologically educated, he worked for many years as a journalist in Jönkoping and Göteborg, where he also launched his career as a littérateur. Influenced by Ignell, in the 1860s Rydberg became keenly interested in religious liberalism and in 1862 published his treatise *Bibelns lära om Kristus* (i.e. The Biblical Doctrine of Christ), in which he argued that the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ were incompatible with the text of the New Testament and the demands of the rational mind. He continued to advance views widely divergent from confessional Lutheranism in a long and variegated series of fictional and nonfictional books and other scholarly works. Through this great literary production Rydberg probably reached several sectors of Swedish society.[5]

Theological controversies also occasionally pitted Lutheran confessionalists against less tradition-bound colleagues who were not generally regarded as liberals. One of the most bitter of these disputes involved the doctrine of the Atonement. Throughout much of the Lutheran world, and especially in Germany, a protracted debate went on throughout much of the nineteenth century between staunch defenders of the Anselmian notion of the substitutionary Atonement of Christ, which was reflected in Article III of the *Augsburg Confession*, and advocates of various "subjective"

concepts of the Atonement, which stressed changes - usually of a moral sort - in individual Christians. This dispute reached Scandinavia relatively late. In Sweden Paul Peter Waldenström (1838-1917) stood at its centre. Associated with the Evangelical National Foundation since the late 1850s, he assumed the editorship of *Pietisten* after Rosenius died in 1868. In the meantime Waldenström had taken a doctorate in classical languages at the University of Uppsala in 1863 and been ordained to the ministry of the Church of Sweden the following year. The storm began in 1872 when the young pastor published in *Pietisten* an assault on the orthodox Lutheran understanding of the Atonement. Claiming that nowhere in the Scriptures could he find direct evidence that God needed to be or had been atoned, he rejected the confessional statement that Christ had been crucified to propitiate the wrath of God. Indeed, Waldenström charged, the very thought was folly, for God's essential nature was one of immutable love; hence, it was absurd to believe that God would not forgive humanity without first being paid a ransom. Instead, sinful humanity had been affected by the Atonement and freed of its sins. This quickly prompted a severe reaction in many quarters of Swedish Lutheranism (including, one might add, amongst Swedish Lutherans in the United States of America), as articles, pamphlets, and books against Waldenström and his supposedly dangerous notions proliferated during the 1870s and subsequently.[6] It was raging, in short, while Witt was completing his studies in the theologically conservative climes of Lund and during his approximately two years in the parish ministry of the Church of Sweden before he sailed to Natal in 1876.

The Genesis of Religious Nonconformity in Sweden

Despite the general opposition of both the confessional clergy and the pietistic and neo-evangelical laity to religious pluralism, denominationalism developed in Sweden during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It should be emphasised, however, that religious toleration evolved slowly and that only a tiny percentage of the Swedes who remained in Sweden belonged to nonconformist churches before Witt left the country. This is hardly surprising in light of the fact that changes in

the laws which had long kept virtually everyone in Sweden linked to the national Lutheran establishment were abrogated over a period of decades, and Swedes who withdrew from the encompassing state church sometimes experienced social ostracism and legal discrimination.

Part of the impetus for change lay in the fact that the popular German wife of Oscar I, who acceded to the Swedish throne in 1844, was a Roman Catholic. Members of that communion thereby gained some measure of toleration and respect, although the Church of Rome grew very slowly in Sweden until the twentieth century, when its expansion there accelerated considerably. Catholic efforts to proselytise Lutherans, moreover, were long forbidden. Nevertheless, during the reign of Oscar I (1844-1859) the Swedish government took cautious steps towards a moderate liberalisation of religious legislation. The concurrence of the otherwise conservative Archbishop of Uppsala, Hans Olof Holmström (1784-1855), contributed to this process.

During the latter half of the 1850s the *Riksdag*, or Swedish parliament, considered several proposals for expanding religious freedom. Lundensian conservatives and other defenders of the *status quo* succeeded temporarily in blocking these bills. In 1858, however, the Conventicles Edict was revoked, thereby legalising the lay-led devotional meetings which had been fairly common in pietistic circles. It was replaced by another law which gave the authorities discretionary power to stop any lay preaching which seemed to promote schisms or which they believed detracted from popular respect for the services of the Church of Sweden. Much of this latter statute, however, was abrogated in 1868. Meanwhile, "dissenter laws" enacted in 1860 allowed Swedes to withdraw from the established church provided they affiliated with one of the recognised nonconformist denominations which the new statutes allowed to function in Sweden.[7] In 1870, moreover, most civil service positions were made accessible to dissenters. These and other reforms ended the monopoly which the Lutheran establishment had held on national religious life for centuries. They opened the door to genuine religious pluralism and, eventually, nearly complete legal equality for various denominations in Sweden. The real flourishing of these developments, however, occurred largely after Witt had left the country.[8] He does not appear to have taken any significant theological impulses from non-Lutheran sources before arriving in Natal in 1876.

Since Witt interacted closely with and eventually became part of Swedish nonconformity after his return to Sweden in 1891, a brief look at the roots of some dissenting denominations there is in order. Baptists were among the first non-Lutherans to evangelise in the country. One of the two principal pioneers was Fredrik Olaus Nilsson (1809-1891), who came under the influence of a German Baptist while working in a sea-farers' mission in Göteborg. Baptised in Hamburg in 1848, he founded in the western coastal province of Halland Sweden's first Baptist congregation the following year. In 1850, however, the government deported Nilsson for violation of the Conventicles Edict. He returned to his homeland in 1861 after the revocation of that statute and served as the pastor of a Baptist church in Göteborg.[9] In the meantime he had baptised Anders Wiberg (1816-1887), a former Swedish state church pastor, in the United States of America in 1852. Returning to Sweden in 1855, Wiberg founded the Baptist congregation in Stockholm, whose members initially suffered harassment and ostracism. From these inauspicious beginnings the denomination spread, especially in central Sweden. It established a seminary for training pastors in 1866. A minor schism in the 1870s led to the creation of the much smaller Free Baptist denomination. It remained in the shadow of the larger group, however, which for a while in the late nineteenth century was the largest nonconformist communion in Sweden. Many Free Baptists refused to participate in military service and political life in general. They minimised the significance of formal theological education for their pastors, and some adhered to the doctrine of Christian perfection. As will be seen in the penultimate chapter, these positions were close to those which Witt represented early in the twentieth century. He never affiliated with a Baptist congregation, though, and at times he was highly critical of what he perceived as theological rigidity amongst Swedish Baptists. There is no evidence, however, that the Free Baptists exercised any influence on Witt before he returned to Sweden in 1891 or, for that matter, thereafter. Indeed, it is questionable whether he had even heard of this new denomination before he left for Southern Africa.

Other denominations were beginning to proliferate in Sweden during the 1870s, signs of the continuing state of flux in the country's religious life. Among the most prominent of non-Lutheran origin was Methodism. Its principal organiser in Sweden was Victor Witting (1825-1906), who became a Methodist in the United States of

America. After returning to Sweden he supervised the denomination's work there from 1867 until 1876. During the latter year the Swedish government recognised Methodism as a legal nonconformist church. As elsewhere, it called for the continuing sanctification of believers, a theme familiar to many pietistically inclined Lutherans in Sweden. Like the Baptists, the Methodists suffered verbal abuse from many Lutheran clergymen and lay people. Formal toleration, in short, did not imply popular acceptance on the national religious scene.

To a lesser extent this also held true for the Swedish Mission Covenant, which sprang from neo-evangelism in the 1870s. In brief, the previously mentioned controversy over the Atonement which Paul Peter Waldenström touched off in 1872 and his criticism of the Church of Sweden as an excessively inclusive institution which welcomed unrepentant sinners to the communion rail led to a renewed dispute over private celebration of the Lord's Supper, i.e. without an ordained pastor officiating at it and outside a sanctuary of the established church. Waldenström entered the centre of the storm in 1876 by officiating at such an extraordinary service in the chapel of a voluntary missionary society in Uppsala. A debate over the appropriateness of this ensued in the Evangelical National Foundation. The more radical party broke away in 1878 and founded the Swedish Mission Covenant (*Svenska Missionsförbundet*). Though most of its members retained their affiliation with the Church of Sweden, the Covenant evolved into a denomination in its own right with a theological seminary, programme of foreign missionary work, publications, and the like.[10]

By no means does this brief survey exhaust the list of nonconformist denominations which either arose in or came to Sweden during Witt's lifetime. One could mention *inter alia* Seventh-day Adventism, which a returned Danish emigrant brought back from the United States of America in 1880, the Salvation Army, which marched into Sweden two years later, and Pentecostalism (in which Witt would become involved), which spread from the United States via Norway to Sweden in 1907. These movements had little in common with each other; their dissimilarity testified to the variety of religious influences which challenged and broke the Lutheran establishment's near-monopoly on the spiritual life of the Swedish people. Moreover, the fact that many of the denominations came from British or American shores underscores how Sweden, which for centuries had taken its theological cues almost

exclusively from Germany, was well before the end of the nineteenth century a religiously variegated society, many of whose townspeople, at least, stood in relatively close proximity to the Anglo-American world. The growing influence of these new currents on Swedish popular religious life was evident to - and possibly exaggerated by - alarmed Lutheran confessionalists, who reacted strongly against them. It was during this period that interest in foreign missionary endeavours was also waxing amongst Swedish Lutherans. As will be seen shortly, during the third quarter of the nineteenth century many of the prominent figures in the efforts to expand the nation's foreign missionary programme shared the concern about the growing challenge of denominationalism and responded by casting their endeavours in a mould of Lutheran confessionalism.

The Swedish Missionary Society

The immediate predecessor of the Church of Sweden Mission was the Swedish Missionary Society, a pietistic, voluntary association which promoted evangelisation both in Sweden and abroad. Although the SMS never sponsored or conducted missionary work in Southern Africa and did not have any apparent connection to Otto Witt, its history is nevertheless significant to this study. Even a brief look at it and the tendencies which led to the surrender of its foreign work to the new SKM in the 1870s sheds light on the missionary climate in Sweden during Witt's formative years and the force of the Lutheran confessional wave which he would eventually find incompatible with his own religious views.

The final decade of the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth witnessed a flourishing of Protestant foreign missions. Stemming largely from pietistic circles in Lutheran, Reformed, and other churches, voluntary societies for the propagation of the Gospel arose in North America, the British Isles, and continental Europe. To mention but a few, the Baptist Missionary Society was born in England in 1792, the London Missionary Society in 1795, the Basel Missionary Society in 1815, the Rhenish Mission in 1828, and, in the New World, the American Board of Commissioners in 1810. Owing largely to British influence, the missionary fervour

also reached Scandinavia, where it had previously been limited almost exclusively to endeavours on Greenland and amongst the Sami or Lapp ethnic minority in the remote northern provinces. Generally speaking, local and regional missionary societies developed first, usually encompassing Moravian and other pietists, most of whom were members of the particular Lutheran state church in question. These eventually coalesced to form national missionary societies, which were voluntary bodies comprising largely Lutheran memberships. The Danish Missionary Society thus came about in 1821, the Swedish Missionary Society in 1835, and the Norwegian Missionary Society in 1842.

By the second decade of the nineteenth century news of foreign missionary ventures, especially those of the London Missionary Society, had begun to appear fairly frequently in the Swedish religious press. Swedes whose interest in these matters was keen launched in 1818 their own periodical, initially an eight-page weekly titled *Underrättelser om Evangelii Fremgång i Alla Wereldsdelar* (i.e. Reports about the Progress of the Gospel in All Parts of the World) which carried primarily British material. Not all Lutherans welcomed this and related undertakings, however, which they perceived as threats to the restoration of orthodox Lutheranism after the Enlightenment. Notwithstanding such opposition, suggestions were made for establishing a national missionary society in Sweden. None was founded for many years, though, and only in 1829 did the first formal one appear, namely the Swedish Missionary Society of Göteborg. Its members were mainly Herrnhut pietists, and its efforts were largely in support of German Moravian missions. It did not conduct its own Swedish missionary programme.

By 1835 interest was sufficiently great to allow concerned Swedes to establish the SMS. Most of its leading figures were Lutherans, but they also included George Scott, the previously mentioned Scottish Methodist who was then doing evangelism in Stockholm. Owing partly to his influence, but also to that of others who were active in the SMS, it functioned initially as an interconfessional support agency which contributed funds to the work of several British, German, and Swiss missionary societies. This emphasis on directing SMS money to foreign bodies gradually receded, however, giving way to efforts to underwrite the work of a small number of Swedish Lutheran missionaries. Simultaneously, the SMS lost its interconfessional character

and became by the 1860s a markedly Lutheran confessional organisation, although it remained a voluntary society, not an integral part of the Church of Sweden. The eminent Swedish missiologist Bengt Sundkler has interpreted the history of the SMS largely in terms of this general shift in the direction of confessionalism. He has also emphasised, however, its transition from individualistic pietism with little attention paid to ecclesiastical authority, to an organisation including many non-pietists, i.e. liturgical formalists and men who placed great importance on the role of the church as such in conducting missionary work as an integral part of its programme of ministry.[11] Much of the impetus for these shifts of theological and ecclesiastical emphasis came from south-western Sweden while Witt was growing up and studying theology at Lund. It is not possible to ascertain how he reacted to them at that time. Only much later would it become evident that spiritually he was of a much different mind than were the Lutheran confessionalists who in effect brought the SMS under the domination of the Church of Sweden. In any case, Witt may well have been awakened to a call to foreign missionary work through the publicity of the SMS. Sundkler is almost certainly correct in asserting that "the greatest importance of the Swedish Missionary Society was its revival and orientation of Swedish missionary interest. Through its activity this interest, originally restricted to somewhat specialized small groups of Moravian persuasion, became an integral part of the religious life of the Swedish people".[12]

The Origins of the Church of Sweden Mission

Had it not been for the founding of the SKM, however, it is questionable whether Witt ever would have become a foreign missionary. That organisation was a natural and almost inevitable outgrowth of the tendencies which had transformed the SMS. The immediate cause was a growing demand for a reconsideration of the loose relationship between the SMS and the Church of Sweden. Delegates to the general assembly of the state church in 1868 discussed the possibility of its undertaking a programme of foreign missionary work rather than relying on voluntary organisations to do so. They also appointed a committee to investigate how this might be done.

That panel reported to the general assembly two years later and proposed that the Church of Sweden proceed with the organisation of its own missionary agency. Not all Swedish Lutherans agreed, however. In several parts of the country cautious observers of developments feared that the creation of an ecclesiastical mission would restrict the freedom of action which the already existing voluntary societies enjoyed. Perhaps they were also worried about a reduction in the amount of funds sponsors would give in a more crowded field. The 1873 general assembly consequently witnessed a heated debate on the matter. The eventual relationship of the proposed Church of Sweden Mission to the voluntary societies remained a disputed point. In the end the general assembly approved the formation of the SKM, which the government agreed to in 1874, the official birth year of this agency of the Church of Sweden.[13]

This development was the outgrowth of a debate over the precise nature of the relationship between the state church and the neophyte mission. Some participants favoured an arrangement in which the Lutheran establishment, through the SKM, would support the already existing missionary societies. Others, however, insisted that the new SKM take over those organisations. The latter party generally won the dispute, although some of the voluntary societies continued to exist. The SMS, for example, surrendered its foreign interests to the SKM but continued to evangelise Sami people in northern Sweden.

Part of the credit for the victory of the latter party in this controversy must be given to Archbishop Anton Niklas Sundberg, the strong-willed first chairman of the SKM's steering committee. His personal background left a deep imprint on the new organisation. On the faculty of the University of Lund beginning in 1849, he was an editor of *Svenska Kyrkotidning* (i.e. Swedish Church Times) from 1855 until 1863. That periodical served as one voice of the Lundensian high church wing of Swedish Lutheranism. He promoted Lutheran confessionalism, maintained a high view of the office of ministry, and defended the centrality of the sacraments in Lutheran worship. Sundberg's authoritarian personality and positions on these and other matters strongly affected his governance of the SKM. As Furberg has observed, "the SKM has never had a leader who, relatively seen, has been as domineering as him. . . . Sundberg's position as the Archbishop [of Uppsala] and his strong-willed

personality also influenced the steering committee to follow his opinions as a rule".[14] Furberg has also argued cogently that the imperious cleric's unimaginative concept of ecclesiastical polity stifled the work of the SKM during its early years. To Furberg, that period "was characterised by [a] remarkable lack of enterprise" stemming from "Sundberg's theory that mission work should be in the hands of the Church's legal organs: Assembly, Chapter and clergy". Under this system and given the secularising tendencies of Swedish society in general late in the nineteenth century, the SKM did not necessarily have the flexibility and means of arousing and nurturing popular interest in overseas evangelism, something which the antecedent voluntary societies had done quite well.[15] The SKM consequently had to rely largely on a limited budget of designated ecclesiastical funds, another factor which perennially hampered the expansion of its activities. During the first two years of its existence the SKM did not establish a single mission field or commission any missionaries. Only shortly before Otto Witt sailed to Natal in 1876 did its leaders seem to have a perceptible sense of geographical direction, and even then they were not, as will be seen in the immediately following chapter, certain where in Southern Africa he would establish a station. All in all, the earliest period of the SKM was one of ineffective leadership and vague goals. This seems all the more ironic as it was an integral part of a relatively authoritarian and quite highly structured state church.

Witt's Formative Years and Acceptance by the SKM

Otto Witt was born and raised in a thoroughly ecclesiastical milieu which made a distinct imprint on his early beliefs, piety, and personality in general. Unfortunately, the sources which directly cast light on the first two decades of his life are scant. The central ones are autobiographical and somewhat tendentious, and thus of questionable reliability. Lacking other sources of information about Witt's childhood and years as a student in Sweden, however, we have little choice but to use critically his own account of them, supplementing his autobiographical statements with other sources whenever feasible.

Peter Otto Holger Witt, as he was formally named, was born on 3 August 1848 in Malmö, a relatively important Baltic port city in the Skåne region of south-western Sweden. At that time the town had a population of approximately 13 000. In its earlier history the area had long been an integral part of Denmark, and the dialect which its inhabitants spoke distinctly reflected that Danish hegemony. Copenhagen lay directly across the Öresund and was accessible by frequent ferry crossings. Witt's father, Holger Anders Witt (1818-1889), a scholarly pastor in the Church of Sweden, was then the co-rector of a school in Malmö. Both grandfathers were also clergymen.

Witt was the second of twelve children. In what appears to be a quite ingenuous autobiographical statement which he wrote at age twenty-six, the young Swede admitted that he had been told that he had been a naughty child. Witt insisted, however, that he had inherited from his mother a love of children and that as a boy he had spent a great deal of time caring for his younger siblings. He praised his mother, who was the daughter of a Swedish Lutheran pastor, as a woman who "lived exclusively for her husband and her children [as] a model of love, self-denial, and inner piety". At her knee Witt and all his siblings learnt to read. She also taught her brood to pray regularly, usually when standing in a semi-circle. Witt's father supplemented those lessons with other religious instruction. The aspiring missionary recalled that as a boy he had memorised the catechism which Jacob Lindblom (1746-1819) had published in 1810, then a standard pedagogical tool in Sweden, and received from his father a reward of six Swedish shillings for doing so.[16]

Witt entered primary school at the relatively late age of nine, and a year later, in 1858, the family moved from Malmö to Helsingborg, a bit farther north on the west coast of Sweden, where his father had been called to a parish. This community, like Malmö, was experiencing rapid growth, partly owing to the influx of economically dispossessed peasants from the countryside. From 4 140 in 1850 its population nearly doubled to 7 941 twenty years later. Witt described himself as "by nature weak and lazy" during his school days there and conceded that under the sway of irresponsible friends he had participated in "boyish pranks". On one occasion, for example, the adventurous youths started a fire which the town's fire brigade had to extinguish. For a few years, moreover, Witt did not do well at school. "I took pleasure not in reading, but in games", he wrote of the late 1850s and early 1860s. Beginning in

1863, however, Witt took his education more seriously, a change which he attributed to the influence of a new friend. Witt also gained motivation when his father gave him a new watch as a reward for satisfactory conduct and achievement at school. This reportedly made an emotional impact on the young teenager. "I spent the following night in tears instead of sleeping", he recalled. "I was never again lazy in school". He and his friend then began to prepare for their confirmation, which in the Scandinavian Lutheran tradition customarily took place at age fifteen or sixteen. Witt called this period of preparation "the happiest and most peaceful I have ever experienced".[17]

In 1868 Witt completed his secondary school education in Helsingborg and entered the University of Lund. In 1875 he wrote that as a child he had decided to become a pastor but that he first wanted to qualify as a teacher.[18] In his memoirs written during the early 1920s, however, Witt emphasised that his aptitude for mathematics and classical languages had determined his choice of subjects at university. In this later account, he stated obliquely that he had fallen under the influence of "bad friends" and, consequently, into "darkness and sin". Witt declared that this brought about a spiritual crisis which made him long for his previously close relationship to God.[19] In any case, after one semester during which he did not read a great deal he accepted a temporary post as a teacher in Akerum, Sweden, which he held for one year. During that spell Witt preached several times, although it is unknown where and under what circumstances. This activity, he declared in 1875, was one factor which prompted him to return to Lund and study theology in preparation for ordination in the Church of Sweden.[20]

Witt's theological studies lasted five years. They encompassed the standard curriculum for this subject at the University of Lund, but because he had not done Hebrew at school he found it necessary to concentrate especially on that subject. Witt emphasised in his application to the Church of Sweden Mission that he had approached his theoretical subjects "with desire and ambition" but admitted candidly that a prime motivation to succeed in them was his eagerness to impress and emulate his girlfriend, Elin Pallin. He described her as a deeply pious young lady whom he had an intense desire to imitate. Witt completed the theoretical stage of his theological studies in mid-1873 and was examined on 27 February of that year.

His performance was satisfactory but hardly dazzling. In the subjects General Theology, New Testament Exegesis, Church History, Confessional Theology, Dogmatics, and Moral Theology he received the mark *approbatur*. Only in Old Testament Exegesis were Witt's professors sufficiently impressed to give him the relatively good mark *cum laude approbatur*.[21] The aspiring pastor then devoted approximately eight months to the concluding phase of his studies, namely practical theology. His examination in those subjects on 18 May 1874 yielded approximately the same results. The theological faculty gave Witt only *approbatur* in Catechetics, Homiletics, and Ecclesiastical Law, but he impressed them a bit more in Liturgics, earning the mark *non sine laude approbatur*.[22] He was certified for ordination on 1 June and ordained in Lund three days later. After filling a temporary pastoral position in Malmö, Witt accepted a call to Helsingborg in February 1875. He and Elin Pallin, who was only a few weeks older than he, were married later that year. In the meantime she had qualified as a teacher with very commendable marks from a Swedish teachers' training college.[23]

During his student days in Lund, Witt considered ending his studies before receiving his degree and emigrating to the United States of America, where he would become a pastor among Swedish immigrants. His father, informed of this wish, reluctantly wrote in 1870 to Tufve Nilsson Hasselquist (1816-1891), with whom he had studied theology in Lund for several years beginning in 1835 and who since 1860 had served as the president of the Augustana Synod, the Swedish-American Lutheran denomination which had been founded ten years earlier, to enquire whether financial assistance for such a move could be made available. The elder Witt made it clear to Hasselquist, however, that he had no enthusiasm for the idea and believed that his son should complete his studies in Sweden.[24] Hasselquist's reply does not appear to be extant, and it is not known whether Otto Witt continued to give the matter much serious thought. In any case, he remained at Lund until receiving his degree and did not visit the United States of America until the early 1890s.

The Diocese of Lund, in which Witt was raised and where he ministered for approximately two years in the mid-1870s, was the scene of diverse theological and spiritual currents. As the eminent Swedish church historian Berndt Gustafsson has pointed out, the legacy of the great Henric Schartau, who had preached in Lund

from 1785 until the 1820s, was still evident in the province of Skåne, not merely in the Diocese of Göteborg which is better known for it.[25] Pastors like Hans Fredrik Cedergren (1799-1863) and Johan Henrik Hägglund (1833-1902) played instrumental roles in keeping this tradition alive, especially in the city of Lund. Hägglund, who was a pastor in the cathedral parish there during all of Witt's years at the university, was particularly popular and influential in this regard. As Benkt Olén has pointed out, "students training for the ministry in Lund and members of other parishes attended Johan Henrik Hägglund's services, catechetical sessions, and Bible lectures".[26] It is entirely conceivable that Witt was among them, although there is no direct evidence of this. How much influence the Schartau tradition, which emphasised *inter alia* the attainment of assurance of one's salvation, had on Witt is impossible to ascertain, although as we shall see in Chapter V his uncertainty of his personal salvation before 1885 caused him great problems, and his account of the spiritual crisis he suffered that year indicates that the orthodox Lutheran understanding of the assurance of salvation for those who accept God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ was not part of his spiritual composition. This might be an indication of influence of the residual Schartauan legacy. Witt is not known to have acknowledged any debt to this tradition. As P. Rydholm pointed out, however, the indirect influence of Schartau extended well beyond people who regarded themselves as Schartauans, especially in southern and western Sweden.[27] In any case, Witt's profound difficulty in finding assurance of salvation could hardly be attributed to his theological studies in orthodox Lutheranism. Lund had also become known for the confessional Lutheran orthodoxy of its university's theological faculty at which Witt studied. The Lund Missionary Society, moreover, appears to have been one of the strongest regional organisations of its type in Sweden. The returned missionary Peter Fjellstedt had founded its magazine, *Lunds Missions-Tidning* (i.e. Lund Mission Newspaper), which he edited until 1867, although he had retired and moved to Germany while Witt was still a student and before Witt is known to have expressed interest in becoming a missionary. Fjellstedt had left Lund in the 1850s, but through the Lund Missionary Society and the popularity of his writings on the Bible part of his spirit and influence appears to have remained viable in that diocese. The extent to which this strong legacy inspired Witt is very difficult to ascertain, although he could not have avoided

exposure to it. Moreover, as we shall see he later evinced a Biblicism at least as keen as Fjellstedt had inspired in many other Swedes, although Witt's reliance on the Bible eventually took him in much different directions than those of which Fjellstedt would have approved. Whether this Biblicism was a case of direct Fjellstedtian influence must remain an open question.

None of the extant sources reveals much about why Witt felt called to foreign missions. The Lund Missionary Society, though very active in the diocese, does not appeared to have been a direct factor, although its general promotion of interest in overseas evangelisation may well have made an imprint on Witt. During all his years in Africa, *Lunds Missions-Tidning* only occasionally carried snippets of news about him, and these were usually reproduced from the periodical of the Church of Sweden Mission. Neither he nor his father, who was still a prominent churchman in the diocese, ever served on the steering committee of the Lund Missionary Society.[28] In his memoirs, which were written more than three decades after he had left the Church of Sweden Mission and reveal considerable bitterness towards his Lutheran heritage, Witt did not mention the Lund Missionary Society at all but placed his decision to enter foreign missionary work into the context of his dissatisfaction with Lutheran theology. During his five years in Lund, Witt wrote retrospectively, he had often disagreed with unspecified doctrines of the state church (presumably as embodied in the *Augsburg Confession*), which he did not believe harmonised fully with "the letter of the inspired Word". It is conceivable that already at that point he had come under the influence of Fjellstedtian Biblicism, although there is no direct evidence that this particular evangelical tradition was the source of his permeable resistance to part of what he was taught in Lund. In any case, instead of challenging his learned professors he had accepted their authority and subconsciously erected what he called "a wall of defence against the arrows of truth", by which he meant fundamental Biblical verities as he then perceived them. "I gradually took this system into myself and became to some degree a personification of it - a system in flesh and blood", Witt wrote in the 1920s.[29] To what extent this evaluation made nearly half a century later is a reliable indication of how his mind was functioning in the 1870s is impossible to ascertain. There may, of course, be some truth in it. If so, Witt's submission to doctrinal authority would hardly have been unique. On

the other hand, it is difficult to discount the possibility that it also reflects the bitterness which he probably felt during decades of subsequent theological conflicts.

Witt recalled that his ministry in the Diocese of Lund did not meet his own expectations. He found that the consolation which he sought to give others through the Gospel did not assuage himself. Witt experienced his worst despair when parishioners came to him for advice in spiritual matters. "Then I wished intensely that I had never become involved with the group of blind leaders to which I belonged", he wrote. He related one instance when he was called to the home of a poor cobbler to baptise a child. The shoemaker had disarmed him by asking the young pastor whether he had been born again. Witt had almost dropped his coffee cup in surprise and, unable to answer what may have been a question posed in innocence, replied by attacking his host for not respecting his professional dignity. "My theological defence was not strong enough", he wrote later, "and it was a long time before I recovered from the trembling which my inner being experienced".[30]

Incidents of this sort brought on another spiritual crisis, one which immediately precipitated Witt's decision to become a missionary. Again the documentation is sparse and one is compelled to rely in large measure on his memoirs. Witt claimed that during a sleepless night when his heart was pounding with fear and he was weeping over his inability to fight effectively against sin, "suddenly a miraculous light" began to shine on his soul. "If I would devote myself to missionary work, to leading a self-denying life amongst the heathens, then God would surely take care of me and allow me to feel his pleasure with me", he recalled thinking. Witt responded by promising God that he would become a missionary if that possibility were opened to him.[31] Precisely when this critical incident occurred is not known. Witt described it as being during the second year of his ministry, which, strictly speaking, would have placed it between mid-1875 and mid-1876. This is implausible, however, because he applied for service in the Church of Sweden Mission in June 1875 and, as we shall see shortly, he had begun to make inquiries about the matter at least several weeks before submitting his application. In all likelihood his memory simply failed him after approximately forty-seven years. When Witt mentioned to his fiancée the possibility of becoming a missionary, she did not express her joy

because she did not wish to influence his decision. Witt assured the Church of Sweden Mission, however, that she concurred in it.[32]

One can hardly exaggerate the difficulty of painting a carefully defined theological and spiritual portrait of Witt at this turning point in his career. This is in the first instance because he left very little theological evidence from the 1870s. His reluctance as a neophyte pastor to express any views which contradicted those of the theological faculty in Lund may have been a factor in this, if his statement about this in his memoirs is correct. In any case, he had been exposed to various currents within the Church of Sweden. The subsequent course of Witt's career would reveal that he was a very restless and unstable soul who for decades wandered from one theological or spiritual emphasis to another. It is possible to trace specifically non-Lutheran influences on his theology beginning in the late 1880s, but not before. It seems plausible, however, that the seeds of some of his eventual theological inconsistency lay in the diverse milieu of the Church of Sweden, and that when at age twenty-seven he initially expressed interest in becoming a foreign missionary he had not arrived at a well-defined, consistent system of belief. There is no reason to doubt that *part* of his understanding of Christianity fitted the confessional Lutheran emphasis of the SKM. As we shall see, as late as 1887 he could publish a book in which that side of his theology is evident. But both his own testimony and the diversity of the milieu in which he was raised and briefly ministered suggest that he was not anchored simply in confessional Lutheranism during the mid-1870s, if in fact he was truly anchored at all. Witt's memoirs indicate strongly that he was not.

The actual application procedure which led to Witt's acceptance as a missionary indicates how inexperienced the neophyte SKM was in the mid-1870s. The young candidate initially approached it through his father, who in 1875 was the dean of the Church of Sweden in Helsingborg. The elder Witt wrote to the steering committee of the SKM in May 1875 to state that his son had expressed interest in service overseas. He asked fundamental questions about the intention of the SKM to begin sending missionaries abroad soon, special preparation for missionary work, and familial support. The committee replied that it indeed hoped to commission missionaries in the near future and that support for both them and their families would be available. It was

not deemed desirable, however, for ordained applicants to participate in a special course to prepare them for the mission field. The committee encouraged Witt to come to Uppsala as soon as possible to be interviewed.[33] Witt, still a pastor on the opposite side of Sweden, does not appear to have done so, although he submitted his application materials early in 1875. The committee considered them and formally accepted both Witt and his bride as missionaries on 1 July. No field of service was specified at that time.[34]

If the application procedure and acceptance of Witt underscored the inexperience of the SKM in such matters, the next few months revealed how its leaders relied to some extent on seasoned Norwegian counterparts in preparing to send the Witts to the field. Precisely why and when the SKM elected to enter Natal as its first field is not clear from its records. Perhaps its leaders simply believed that since Norwegian Lutherans had been working there for more than a quarter of a century it would not entail the risks of entering into an entirely virginal area. In any case, in November 1875 Adolf Sjöding (1816-1900), a member of the SKM steering committee, informed Witt that the mission would seek to penetrate Zululand. Sjöding simultaneously urged him to contact the headquarters of the Norwegian Missionary Society in Stavanger for advice about the most favourable route to the field. Within hours of receiving this letter, Witt, still in Helsingborg, wrote to Archbishop Sundberg in Uppsala in November 1875 and asked whether it would be better for him to travel to Stavanger and inquire personally about conditions in Zululand and what kind of provisions he and his wife would need there. He stated that he could not afford to pay for such a trip himself and requested the SKM to defray the expenses he incurred on it.[35] It is not known whether the anxious prospective missionary actually visited Norway at that time. Sundberg replied indirectly to him through Sjöding, questioning the necessity of Witt going to Stavanger but stating that if Witt thought otherwise he would not hinder him and expressing that it might be permissible to appropriate funds for that purpose. In harmony with his sympathies, however, Sundberg thought it best for Witt not to consult the pietistic Norwegian Missionary Society, but rather the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission in Kristiania.[36] In any case, when Witt and his wife left Scandinavia for Southern Africa a few months later, they travelled with a young Norwegian woman, Gudve Bjørge, who was to join

the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission in Natal and Zululand. There is no evidence of contact between Witt and the Norwegian Missionary Society before he arrived in Africa.

Witt was not the first Swedish missionary in Southern Africa. That distinction may belong to Hans Peter Hallbeck (1784-1840), whose origins were somewhat similar to those of Witt but whose career differed markedly from his. A native of Malmö, he began to study theology in Lund in 1801 but left the university there less than two years later. While subsequently working as a tutor in Göteborg, he became acquainted with the Herrnhut society (Moravian Brethren) in that city. Hallbeck overcame initial misgivings about it and appears to have been impressed with the charity which many of its members extended to the victims of a massive fire which destroyed 179 houses in the city and left nearly 3 000 people homeless shortly before Christmas in 1802. In 1804 he visited Christiansfeld, the Herrnhut community in North Slesvig, and was sufficiently moved to become associated with the society in Göteborg after returning to that city. In 1813 Hallbeck went to England and Northern Ireland, where he became deeply involved in the Herrnhut ministry. Ordained in 1815, he sailed to the Cape two years later to begin a distinguished career as a Moravian missionary in that British colony, and was consecrated a bishop in 1836. Hallbeck's work contributed to a relatively rapid expansion of this field. He also helped to establish one of the first institutions for the training of teachers in the colony.[37]

Witt's Journey to Southern Africa

Witt's journey to the mission field, for which the only major source is his copious correspondence to his superiors in the SKM and to its monthly periodical, *Missions-Tidning*, is in itself significant for at least two major reasons. Those reports shed light not only on the tribulations which missionaries generally endured when travelling to Africa but also on the shock which Witt suffered upon encountering cultures markedly different from his own. Less importantly, the documentary tracks which Witt left on his way to the Southern Hemisphere indicate that he and his wife were

accustomed to the material privileges of clerical life in Sweden and sought to take many of them along to what they must have known would be vastly poorer society.

The Witts left Lund, Sweden, at the end of January or the beginning of February 1876. Their itinerary took them by way of Malmö, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Basel, Lausanne, Geneva, Pisa, Rome, Naples, Alexandria, the Suez Canal, Aden, and Zanzibar to Durban, which they reached on 19 April. Gudve Björge joined them before they left Sweden. The journey does not appear to have been especially stressful. Witt kept an expense account and frequently bought such items as tobacco, cigars, and beer *en route*. In Hamburg he purchased eight Cook's hotel vouchers, and he and his wife visited the renowned zoo, Hagenbeck's Tierpark, during their unexplained three-day stay in that Hanseatic city.[38]

After nearly a week in Bismarck's German *Reich*, the three Scandinavians crossed the Rhine into Switzerland spent several days visiting the training institute of the Basel Missionary Society. In his letter from there, one of his first to the Church of Sweden Mission, Witt made it clear that he was impressed with the facilities and programme of the institution. He noted that there were no fewer than eighty-eight students in residence and that all who promised to serve the sponsoring society received free tuition, room, and board. The young Swede found that part of the standard six-year curriculum resembled his own education in Helsingborg and Lund, especially the emphasis on theology as well as the Biblical languages and Latin. Witt noted, however, that the students in Basel were also learning English, missiology, basic medicine, music, and industrial arts. Perhaps he questioned the adequacy of his own preparation and envisaged a similar institution being established to educate Swedes for the propagation of the Gospel abroad.

In the same letter Witt unwittingly added to the case for better preparation of prospective Swedish missionaries by making comments which reflected his ignorance of the people whom he was to evangelise. "There is not a trace of religion amongst them", he declared. "They do not worship idols and, unlike other heathens, they do not have any concept of a Supreme Being. Everything of an intellectual nature is unknown to them".[39] What Witt's sources for this information had been is not known. He may have spent time in late 1875 or early 1876 reading accounts by Norwegian missionaries to the Zulus; the high degree of similarity between the

languages of Norway and Sweden would have made it easy for him to have read the periodicals and other publications of the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission. Those would have been the most plausible and readily available sources. It is unlikely that Witt corresponded with Norwegian missionaries in Natal or Zululand between late November 1875, when he learnt that the SKM intended to send him to the Zulus, and the beginning of February 1876, when he left Sweden.

Witt's initial encounter with Africa was an unpleasant one which triggered at least a mildly distasteful reaction in him. At the end of February he, his wife, and Gudvè Björge sailed from Naples to Alexandria. From that Egyptian port he wrote to an uncle in Sweden and described both the city and its inhabitants in disparaging terms. "Here we now sit in dirty, unappealing Alexandria, surrounded by almost exclusively red, black, and brown faces. One does not get a good impression of these unreliable people, whose only concern is getting money". The young Swedish parson related with indignation how a customs official had had the audacity to request a bribe in return for allowing his baggage to pass through inspection without difficulty. Less indignantly, Witt admitted that in order to avoid trouble he had co-operated by giving the Egyptian the requested sum.[40]

The small corner of Asia which Witt visited also fared poorly under his acerbic pen. In a letter which he wrote from Aden to *Missions-Tidning* a fortnight later, he complained about the "terrible heat" and insisted that the ice which a local factory produced was warmer than that in Sweden. Witt's contrasting of foreign phenomena with what he had been accustomed to in his native country did not end there. Referring to the bribery incident in Alexandria, though without mentioning his own part in bribing the official, he insisted that things of that sort would not happen in Sweden. Witt also described his visit to a one-roomed French school in Alexandria, whose simplicity was unmatched anywhere in his homeland. One of the very few positive remarks he made about either Egypt or Aden concerned the availability of packaged toothpicks from Göteborg in the latter country.[41]

The last two legs of the voyage to Natal were shipboard passages from Aden to Zanzibar and from there to Durban. Again Witt found himself in an exotic world. A few weeks after arriving in Natal he wrote to *Missions-Tidning* and described

his first encounter with slavery. On board the ship, Witt related, were 165 liberated Africans whom Arabian slave-traders had caught or otherwise acquired near Lake Nyasa and were transporting to Zanzibar when a British naval vessel intercepted their ship and freed their human cargo. A large number of the 165 were children, the clearly horrified Swede wrote. Originally there had been approximately 100 more aboard the slave ship, but when a storm had threatened it the Arabs had hurled roughly that number overboard. Witt found modest consolation in the fact that the children were being taken to Natal to be placed in mission schools. Alluding to Genesis 50:20, he believed that what man had meant for evil God had designed for good.[42]

The Witts and Björge disembarked in Durban on 19 April. H.P.S. Schreuder of the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission had send a servant with an ox wagon to that port to meet them and bring him to his station. They travelled almost immediately to Untunjambili, the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission station in north-eastern Natal. As indicated earlier, there is no evidence that Witt himself had corresponded with Schreuder or any other Norwegian missionaries in the field, but he probably had been in contact with both the headquarters of the Schreuder Mission in Kristiania (since 1925 called Oslo) and that of the Norwegian Missionary Society in Stavanger before leaving Sweden. Schreuder's sponsors in the Norwegian capital may have encouraged him to proceed to Untunjambili and informed the senior Norwegian missionary that the young Swede and his wife would accompany Björge there. As will be pointed out at greater length in the immediately following section, both the SKM and the Schreuder Mission regarded themselves as orthodox Lutheran organisations and as direct extensions of their respective state churches, so co-operation between the two undoubtedly seemed natural to many supporters of both. The political union of Sweden and Norway at that time, and the high degree of similarity between the languages of the two countries would have reinforced that belief. In any case, the three Scandinavians and their escort trekked across the rugged veld and arrived at Untunjambili on 7 May.[43]

Initially Witt seemed to fit in well at Untunjambili and to be on the path towards an effective ministry. The Zulu language, which to many other missionaries seemed an almost impregnable wall separating them from the people whom they sought

to evangelise, was apparently not particularly intimidating to him. Many years later he boasted that he had memorised the Lord's Prayer in it within a few hours of his arrival at Untunjambili and that a mere three days later he had begun to assist Schreuder liturgically at that station.[44] Witt and his wife remained there for what may have been a few felicitous months, but his aptitude for Nguni linguistics which he claimed to have exhibited at Untunjambili did not foreshadow smooth relations while co-operating with Schreuder or signal harmony after the SKM began to acquire its own stations.

Zulu Missions in the Mid-1870s

The SKM began its endeavours in Southern Africa relatively late. It was neither the first Lutheran nor the first Scandinavian mission to evangelise the Zulus. Indeed, missionaries from several European countries and the United States of America and representing a relatively broad segment of Protestantism had preceded Witt to that field, some of them before he was born. Generally speaking, by the 1870s they had made little progress, to the extent that one dare gauge progress by the number of Africans who had professed Christianity after being exposed to their ministries. They had, however, established scores of stations in Natal and a smaller but considerable number in Zululand. These missionaries had not only proclaimed the Gospel but also opened schools at their stations and in general brought many aspects of European civilisation to the Zulu people. Large numbers of indigenes, however, were as yet unreached in the 1870s, and many, especially the Zulu monarch King Cetshwayo (1826-1884) and most of his chiefs, were either indifferent or hostile to Christianity, if not to the availability of medical treatment and other apparent benefits of having missionaries in their midst. In short, when Witt disembarked in Natal, he entered a field which was being vigorously but inconsistently evangelised, one which still afforded virtually inexhaustible opportunities for planting churches. A brief review of the other missions which were then operating in Natal and Zululand and consideration of the principal problems they had confronted would therefore seem essential for comprehending the situation in which Witt found himself.

The first missionaries to make a noteworthy imprint on the religious landscape of Zulu-dominated areas of south-eastern Africa were primarily Congregationalists whom the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent to Natal in 1834. Within a year of their arrival there these Yankees had entered Zululand, but conflicts between the Zulus and the Voortrekkers forced them to withdraw into Natal, where they continued to do most of their work in what became a highly significant and visible mission. Another effort to establish stations in Zululand during the 1840s fell victim to King Mpande's opposition. Missionaries attached to the "American Board" eventually translated the entire Bible into Zulu and established various educational and other institutions for the Zulu people. They also assisted subsequent missionaries in that field. Schreuder, for example, initially spent more than a year as a guest at American stations when he arrived in Natal in 1844.

The Methodists also limited their Zulu missionary work in the region to Natal during the nineteenth century. Wesleyan clergymen began to minister to British settlers in the colony during the 1840s, initially in the town which became Durban but later in Pietermaritzburg. Work amongst the Zulus was an outgrowth of the congregations which comprised whites, a pattern which also characterised that of various other British denominations and, of course, the Dutch Reformed Church.

Scottish Free Church missionary work in Southern Africa had begun in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope and was long centred at Lovedale, but it spread into Natal after 1850. In the latter colony the Scottish missionary presence was never large, but one well-known venue of it would play a role in Witt's career. He frequently visited the Gordon Memorial Station at Msinga, which had been established in 1870 and where Dr James Dalzell (1841-1901), who became his acquaintance and, later, severe critic, laboured.

No consideration of missionary work in Natal and Zululand would be complete without mention of Anglican endeavours. It originated shortly after the Church of England consecrated its first Bishop of Natal, the soon controversial John William Colenso (1814-1883). When this remarkable Cornishman arrived in Natal for the second time in 1855, he brought with him a group of missionaries who quickly developed several stations, chiefly near Pietermaritzburg. Colenso was very actively involved in this work, which he viewed as central to his own ministry. His residence near

the capital, Bishopstowe, became in 1856 the site of a school for African boys, Ekukanyeni. Colenso soon gained a formidable reputation as a Zulu linguist and translator. Some of his practices as a missionary, however, particularly his willingness to baptise continuing polygamists, and his ready acceptance of nineteenth-century radical Biblical criticism, especially with regard to the authorship of the Pentateuch and his heterodox commentary on Romans, soon placed the bishop at odds with many of his fellow Anglicans and with missionaries of several other denominations. Colenso was tried for heresy and deposed from his bishopric in 1863, and in 1866 he was excommunicated. Owing to these and other controversies, the denomination eventually split in two. By the 1870s, however, its missionary work had spread from Natal into Zululand, although it was quite limited in that kingdom prior to the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879.

The Roman Catholic Church also lost little time in beginning missionary work amongst the Zulus. In 1852 Bishop M.J.F. Allard and Father Jean-Baptiste Sabon, Canadian Oblates of Mary Immaculate, arrived in Durban to undertake some of the earliest evangelisation in that port. By the time of Witt's landing in Natal, the Catholic presence in the colony was perceptible though still very small, and it had not yet extended across the Tugela into Zululand. In the history of the SKM, however, Roman Catholic missionary work was rarely mentioned, whereas Colenso's controversial policies and allegedly heterodox theology were occasionally the subject of sharp criticism.

From a Swedish viewpoint, however, the most relevant bits in the missionary kaleidoscope which had developed in Natal and Zululand before 1876 were obviously those which were at least partly in the Lutheran tradition. Two of these four were Norwegian. The first, the Norwegian Missionary Society, a voluntary organisation with a strongly pietistic emphasis, had become involved in Natal in the mid-1840s when it assumed responsibility for the work of Hans Paludan Smith Schreuder (1817-1882), who had arrived in the colony in 1844 in the service of a local missionary society in Kristiania, the capital of Norway. A large, intelligent, theologically conservative, and strong-willed man, he had arduously built up, with the assistance of many colleagues, several stations in Natal since the late 1840s. In 1850, moreover, Schreuder had gained permission from Mpande to conduct missionary work in

Zululand, thereby becoming the first missionary to do so on a permanent basis. Schreuder was not able to baptise his first convert until 1858, and during the next twenty years the number of indigenous Christians at Norwegian stations remained small. The Norwegian Missionary Society nevertheless arranged for him to be consecrated a bishop in 1866. By the time of Witt's arrival in the colony, the Norwegian Missionary Society had established several stations in Zululand, and some of its representatives enjoyed the confidence of Cetshwayo. At no time, however, could these missionaries regard their position there as secure, especially after relations between Zululand and Natal began to deteriorate during the latter half of the 1870s.

Complicating matters, in 1873 Schreuder had seceded from the Norwegian Missionary Society, principally over personal controversies surrounding his desire to exercise the same powers in the mission field that bishops in Norway had in ecclesiastical affairs. Supporters in that country, chiefly conservatives in Kristiania, had thereupon founded the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission to allow him to carry on his work. This organisation was intended to serve as an integral part of the state church and not, like the Norwegian Missionary Society, be merely a voluntary society nearly all of whose members happened to belong to the Church of Norway. Moreover, the theological stance of its leaders was conservative Lutheranism. Yet the "Schreuder Mission", as it was almost invariably called, grew very slowly. In 1876 Schreuder controlled only one well-developed station in Natal, namely Untunjambili, and one in Zululand, Ntumeni. Furthermore, he did not have any ordained colleagues to assist him, a fact which undoubtedly made him receptive to overtures from the SKM to co-operate in the field. The Norwegian Missionary Society, on the other hand, had several ordained men in both Natal and Zululand at that time.

At a time when most theologically educated Swedes could not only read but also speak German, it was inevitable that Witt and other representatives of the SKM felt an affinity with Lutheran missionaries from Bismarck's *Reich*. Such men commissioned by two such German organisations had begun to evangelise in Natal by the time Witt landed there. The first was the Berlin Missionary Society, which under the leadership of Carl Wilhelm Posselt (1815-1885) first undertook work in Natal in 1847. The SKM did not have much contact with the Berliners while Witt was in the field. On the other hand, its relations with the Hermannsburg Mission,

which first entered Natal in 1849 and began to operate in Zululand a few years later, were initially crucial. Some of the Swedes stayed briefly at Hermannsburg stations in order to learn Zulu and to become acclimated to missionary life in general. One of Witt's first colleagues, moreover, had served the Hermannsburg Mission for several years. Finally, as will be seen, the confessionally conservative Hermannsburgers combined missionary work with German emigration to create several settlements in Natal. Witt and his colleagues in the SKM's field briefly considered emulating this experiment and promoting Swedish emigration in the late 1870s. As we shall see shortly, however, this vision came to naught.

The SKM and the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission

As mentioned in the immediately preceding section, the SKM resembled the Schreuder Mission in that theologically both were confessional Lutheran and the founders of each body regarded their organisation as an integral part of their respective state Lutheran church. Strictly speaking, the Norwegian part of this near equation was and always remained a voluntary missionary society, though one more ecclesiastical and less pietistic than its rival, from which Schreuder had seceded, the Norwegian Missionary Society. In the eyes of the Schreuder Mission's supporters, however, it nevertheless parallelled the SKM. That Witt proceeded to Untunjambili and placed himself under Schreuder's tutelage in a strange and demanding land is therefore not at all surprising. In Schreuder, who then had thirty years of experience amongst the Zulus and, by all accounts, possessed an impressive command of their language, he had a gifted, Scandinavian-speaking tutor to ease his introduction to that difficult tongue and to missionary life in general. The relationship between the two strong-willed men soon proved to be stormy, short-lived, and consequential for the formative years of the SKM in Southern Africa.

While part of the difficulty undoubtedly lay in the personalities of Witt and Schreuder, much of it can also be attributed to the facts that the SKM was a new organisation without a well-defined chain of command or other firm guidelines for its personnel to follow and that despite the efforts of its leadership it had not succeeded

in establishing two-way communication with Schreuder before Witt arrived at Untunjambili. Although the letter does not appear to be extant, it is evident from Schreuder's reply that Archbishop Sundberg of the SKM wrote to him on 15 December 1875, i.e. approximately seven weeks before Witt left Sweden. This was not, of course, sufficient time in which to conclude satisfactory arrangements. From Schreuder's response it appears that Sundberg asked him whether he would be willing to allow Witt and a second Swedish missionary to live temporarily at one of his stations, where Witt might be able to establish the first SKM station in Southern Africa, whether Schreuder deemed it advisable to commission artisans to accompany ordained missionaries to the field, and whether Schreuder would consider placing his station at Ntumeni in Zululand at the disposal of the SKM. Unfortunately for the Swedes, Schreuder did not reply until January 1877, more than eight months after Witt had arrived at Untunjambili. His answers to Sundberg's queries were cordial and reasoned, if not especially optimistic. He assured the archbishop that it would be a "fraternal joy" to assist the SKM in establishing its own mission to the Zulus. With regard to a site for Witt's own station, Schreuder pointed out that the deteriorating state of relations between Zululand and the British colony of Natal (which led to the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War twenty-four months later) made it virtually impossible to secure land in Cetshwayo's turbulent kingdom. In the light of that, Schreuder suggested that the SKM would have to be satisfied with founding a station either in a native reserve in the interior of Natal or buying private or government land near the border of Zululand. He was not opposed in principle to giving Ntumeni to the SKM. In fact, Schreuder declared that he believed a union of the SKM and his own mission should take place. In practice, however, the political situation in Zululand prevented him from relinquishing Ntumeni. Schreuder was at that time still on relatively cordial terms with Cetshwayo, whom, however, he described as "decidedly hostile to missions" and who was allowing him to retain Ntumeni only because of assurances made to the British at the time of his coronation in 1873.[45]

By mid-1877 the situation in Zululand had deteriorated to the point where most of the missionaries there joined in an exodus out of that kingdom. Witt also eventually left, although in his reports to the SKM he did not cite violence in Zululand as his primary reason for withdrawing. Perhaps it was not; his relations with Schreuder

may have been sufficient cause for him to want to leave and establish his own station, which had to be in Natal. In any case, however, it is known from other sources, chiefly Schreuder's reports, that violence had reached Ntumeni by June 1877. That month Schreuder reported from there that "the believers here have not been able to sleep in peace in their houses for a long time, but have taken to the forests for part of the night, for it is the custom of Zulu executioners to attack the kraals early at dawn. . .". Three members of the congregation at Ntumeni had recently visited Cetshwayo to ask him why he wanted Zulu Christians killed. The monarch had pleaded ignorance of the persecution and attributed the murders to subjects who had acted without consulting him. Schreuder was highly sceptical of this and nearly left Zululand when nearly all the other Norwegian missionaries and their families crossed the Tugela to the assumed security of Natal.[46]

Even if the political climate in Zululand had been amenable to founding a specifically Swedish mission there, another difficulty may have prevented the SKM from becoming established in that troubled kingdom during the 1870s. Witt questioned the rectitude of accepting Ntumeni from Schreuder on a permanent basis. That station had been founded when Schreuder was still serving the Norwegian Missionary Society, and the ownership of it was a matter of dispute. In correspondence with the steering committee of the SKM, Witt revealed that he found it unjust for Schreuder to have taken for his new mission a station for which individual supporters of the elder Norwegian society had contributed funds. He suggested that before accepting Ntumeni, the leaders of the SKM discuss the matter with their counterparts in Norway.[47]

In the meantime the SKM remained in contact with Schreuder. Its steering committee apparently accepted his belated reply with gratitude, and in June 1877 Dr Carl Magnus Fallenius (1815-1879), its vice-chairman, informed him that it wished to place two new missionaries under his "supervision" and "counsel" (*Eders tillsyn og Edra råd*). As compensation for Schreuder's assistance, the SKM volunteered to give him an honorarium of £50.[48] The Norwegian missionary initially declined it, but Archbishop Sundberg insisted later in 1877 that he accept this sum, which Schreuder appears to have done.[49]

Witt's two new colleagues whom the SKM asked Schreuder to supervise would both play very important roles in his life and the early history of Swedish missions

to the Zulus. The elder of the two, Carl Ludvig Flygare (1834-1883), was a native of Fröstorp near Skara, Sweden. The son of a teacher, he had initially pursued a career as a mechanic first in the Swedish community of Motala and later in Hull and Hamburg. The young artisan left this trade while in his twenties, however, and, like several other Scandinavian Lutherans, joined the German confessional Lutheran Hermannsburg Mission, which provided his theological education and arranged his ordination in Hannover in 1866. Flygare then served as a missionary to the Zulus, chiefly at Ifafa and elsewhere on the Natal South Coast, for nearly a decade. In 1875 he had been compelled to send his sickly German wife and his children back to Germany. Unable to support them from afar on his missionary salary, he had then demitted his post in the Hermannsburg Mission and taken a position as a mechanic in Durban. Early in 1877 Flygare, already at Untunjambili, applied for service in the SKM after Witt became acquainted with him and suggested that he could become his first colleague.[50] To allay suspicion of why he had left the Hermannsburg Mission, he enclosed in his application a copy of a letter from Karl Hohls, its superintendent in Natal, who testified that "während er [i.e. Flygare] im Dienste unserer Mission war, er seinem Berufe mit groβem Eifer abgelegen hat und bezeuge hiermit auf's Bündigste und Bestimmteste, daβ er nicht aus unserem Dienste entlassen worden ist wegen vergehen, wie er denn überhaupt nicht entlassen ist, sondern er ist ausgetreten. . .".[51] The steering committee of the SKM officially accepted Flygare on 4 May 1877.[52]

Frans L. Fristedt (1846-1929), a bachelor two years older than Witt, was the second missionary whom the SKM commissioned for service in Africa. Ordained in 1871 and accepted by the SKM for work overseas in 1876, he left Sweden in June 1877. Like Witt, Fristedt was a headstrong young clergyman whose obstinacy occasionally exceeded his tact. Unlike him, however, he had a deeply rooted commitment to Lutheran orthodoxy which came to the fore in his encounters with Protestant pluralism long before he reached Africa. *En route* to Natal, Fristedt spent approximately a week in London, where he had the opportunity to observe and criticise liturgical traditions other than his own. At several British nonconformist services he found the absence of an altar and the Lord's Supper surprising and regrettable. Where the Sacrament of the Altar was not celebrated, the Word was at least preached, but

Fristedt was not satisfied with it, either. He criticised the Methodist and Anglican sermons he heard for being "inordinately legalistic" and those from Quaker and Presbyterian pulpits as "too evangelical" without, however, explaining his use of the latter adjective. On board a ship bound for Cape Town, Fristedt had the opportunity to engage in lengthy discussions about sacramental theology and predestination with a Dutch Reformed theologian who was returning to the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope. The young Swede emerged from those conversations convinced of "the perfection of the Lutheran confession and its superiority to that of the Reformed".[53] Witt was also a loyal son of the Church of Sweden during the 1870s, but he neither boasted about the superiority of Lutheranism over other confessional traditions nor is known to have launched verbal assaults on non-Lutheran denominations. The distinction is significant, because Fristedt remained a prominent figure in the SKM whereas Witt eventually fell under the influence of non-Lutheran divines, left the SKM, and continued on a spiritual pilgrimage which took him far from his national religious heritage. On 2 August, six weeks after leaving Sweden, Fristedt reached Durban, where Witt welcomed him to Natal. Probably owing to the paucity of available accommodation at Schreuder's Untunjambili (the Witts were by then parents of an infant daughter), Fristedt initially went to the Hermannsburg station and colony Neu Hermannsburg.[54] He remained at that large station for several months, chiefly in order to learn the Zulu language.

By the time of Fristedt's arrival in Natal, relations between Witt and Flygare on the one hand and Schreuder on the other had undeniably deteriorated. The two Swedes, especially Witt, had spent time at Ntumeni, both together with Schreuder and in his absence when the Norwegian bishop manned his station in Natal, Untunjambili. Since arriving at Ntumeni in August 1876, Witt, who appears to have had considerable aptitude for learning foreign languages, had conducted an active ministry there. The station, then approximately twenty-five years old, had a congregation of some 100 Zulu converts, a chapel which could accommodate about 150 people, a fruitful orchard, and a day school which twenty people attended. An unspecified number of Zulu converts resided near the periphery of the station. By October Witt had preached his first sermon at Ntumeni and baptised a Zulu infant with the name Utituse, corresponding to Titus. He was officiating regularly at worship while his talented

wife served as the organist. Clearly pleased with some of the liturgical rudiments at Ntumeni, Witt boasted that the singing of the congregation "far surpasses that in most rural churches in Sweden". Less glowingly, he believed that the faith of most Zulu converts was fragile and needed the intercessory prayers of seasoned Swedish Christians.[55]

Witt's stint at Ntumeni was clearly an important and formative period in his career as a missionary to the Zulus. During those months he engaged in several projects and made some minor demands on the SKM steering committee which were either significant in themselves or foreshadowed future difficulties which he encountered. There is no reason to doubt that in 1876 and 1877 Witt regarded himself as a thoroughly loyal son of the Church of Sweden and that he did not question its authority. He did his missionary work specifically as its representative, not merely as a Christian who simply happened to be a member of the official national religious body. Well before the end of 1876 Witt had begun to translate the Church of Sweden's handbook into Zulu, indicating that he envisaged helping to form an indigenous denomination which to some degree reflected the structure and liturgy of his birthright ethnic Lutheran tradition. Moreover, he quite understandably felt isolated from the theological milieu in which he had spent several years and the spiritual climate in which he had been raised before leaving Sweden. Witt confided to the SKM steering committee that at Ntumeni he did not have any "spiritual nourishment" apart from the books he had read at the University of Lund and taken along to Africa and requested that reading material be sent to him.[56]

The Witts' first child, a daughter, was born in late 1876, and by the end of that year they began to make additional demands on the SKM. Witt wrote to the steering committee at the end of December to insist that a maid be sent from Sweden to assist them with housekeeping and child care. "Neither of these things can be entrusted to a black person", he declared. Witt emphasised that if such a girl were hired, she be their family maid, not a servant of the SKM, even though he expected the mission to pay her salary. He stated that if she did not understand this from the outset, she might have the audacity to believe that her obligation was to serve the SKM directly, refuse to do menial work, and insist on teaching in a mission school.[57] Related to this, Witt began to clamour for a larger salary. Unfortunately, the extant records

do not reveal how much the SKM initially paid him. In June 1877, however, a little more than a year after arriving in Southern Africa, he cited Schreuder as suggesting that the SKM ought to pay its missionaries £100 *per annum*. He justified this by quoting the Norwegian missionary bishop that for missionaries who were not also engaged in farming the cost of living in Natal was "inordinately expensive". At the same time Witt suggested that the SKM underwrite the purchase of a rifle which he felt he needed as protection against wild animals.[58] As we shall see shortly, before long he would request much higher remuneration after consulting non-Scandinavian counterparts in Natal about their salaries.

By the latter part of 1877, therefore, Witt had more than a year's experience as a missionary, while Flygare could boast nearly a decade. Their conflict with Schreuder, to whose advice and counsel the steering committee of the SKM had entrusted them, is more understandable in the light of this. In September 1877 Witt informed the steering committee of the SKM that the previous six months which he and Flygare had spent with Schreuder had been "anything but pleasant". He conceded that the Norwegian was a gifted missionary but insisted that continuing the relationship would pose a threat both to himself and the SKM's endeavours in Southern Africa. Witt did not explain fully how the difficulties had arisen, but he accused Schreuder of engaging in unspecified intrigues against him. Unknowingly repeating a theme on which several of Schreuder's erstwhile colleagues in the Norwegian Missionary Society had commented, Witt declared that "regardless of how often the bishop [i.e. Schreuder] appears to have forgotten that I am a man and not a boy, he has never yet forgotten that he is a bishop. . .". Witt made it clear that he and Flygare were on the verge of leaving Schreuder's stations. Undoubtedly realising that he was writing to high-ranking authorities in the Church of Sweden, Witt emphasised that he himself was not power-hungry and that he had sought to co-operate with the ostensibly imperious Norwegian. He also declared that he would continue to respect the authority of his superiors in Uppsala and Stockholm.[59] The SKM steering committee, which had repeatedly expressed its respect for Schreuder and appreciation of his assistance, disapproved of Witt's leaving him. In June 1877 it had determined that Witt was to remain at Ntumeni until the SKM had established its own station for him.[60]

Later that year, after the breach between Schreuder and the two Swedish missionaries was beyond repair, the Norwegian wrote to the steering committee of the SKM to give his own account of what had brought it about. He stated that *en route* to Natal Witt had written to him from Basel and indicated in effect that his own understanding of how relations between the SKM and the Schreuder Mission differed markedly from that of Sundberg. After Witt's arrival at Untunjambili, Schreuder had spoken with him about this and had his suspicion confirmed: There had been a fundamental misunderstanding about what Schreuder's role was to be. Witt insisted that the SKM was not interested in Norwegian leadership or permanent supervision, but merely in availing itself of Schreuder's expertise on a temporary basis. Subsequently Schreuder learnt that Fristedt shared Witt's understanding of what Schreuder's role should be. The Norwegian bishop underscored his desire to remain on cordial terms with the SKM and offered to continue to assist it. He realised, however, that his vision of a merger of his own diminutive mission with the SKM would probably never be realised.[61]

After the breach was a *fait accompli*, the steering committee declared that it disapproved of the explanation which Witt and Flygare gave for it.[62] These clerics in Sweden understood, however, that at that stage it was bootless to belabour the point. Instead, they lent their support to their representatives in Natal in the acquisition and development of a station, a process which itself caused further tension.

The SKM's period of intimate co-operation with the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission was short-lived and, from the viewpoint of the Swedish missionaries, at best a mixed blessing. Schreuder's defensive biographer, the eminent Norwegian missiologist Olav Guttorm Myklebust (b. 1905), attributed to the Swedes practically all the responsibility for the demise of their co-operation with Schreuder but correctly emphasised the undeniable assistance which his hero lent the neophyte missionaries. Myklebust sought to excuse Schreuder's conduct on the grounds that the leadership of the SKM had never clearly defined the terms "supervision" and "counsel" in requesting the Norwegian bishop to supervise its men. Myklebust also asserted that the Swedes in the field soon began to direct at one another the same accusations they had made against Schreuder.[63] Both of these arguments, however, beg the fundamental question of the appropriateness of Schreuder's attitude towards the

Swedish missionaries which, if Witt's portrayal of it is even remotely correct, militated against productive co-operation by almost any standard. Furthermore, Myklebust's line of argumentation reminds one of the pot which called the kettle black; the fact that relations between Witt on the one hand and Flygare and Fristedt on the other deteriorated in 1879 hardly excuses Schreuder's conduct in 1876 and 1877. Finally, as will be seen, the difficulties which soon broke out amongst the Swedes were of a different nature from those which disturbed their relations with Schreuder.

The Acquisition of Oscarsberg

By the time Fristedt arrived in Natal, the restless Witt was clearly eager both to escape from what he regarded as Schreuder's condescending and authoritarian behaviour towards him and, in accordance with the original plan of the SKM, to establish his own station. Acquiring a site in Zululand proved impossible, as Schreuder had warned the SKM and as Witt apparently realised at an early stage. The steering committee in Uppsala was aware of this from its recent correspondence with Schreuder. In June 1877 it consequently voted to direct Witt to seek a site in Natal close to the border of Zululand. It also empowered him to purchase materials for the construction of a manse and to erect a "Kaffer hut" to accommodate eventual indigenous servants.[64] In a reply to the committee which he wrote in September 1877, Witt stated that land could be purchased just south of the Tugela River. This would have allowed the SKM to develop a staging area close to Cetshwayo's kingdom from which it could eventually launch its evangelistic invasion when conditions there became more amenable to missionaries. Unfortunately, Witt's thoughts in 1877 regarding the possibility of a British attack on Zululand can be ascertained only in general terms. He appears to have shared the belief of many other missionaries in Natal (some of whom had recently withdrawn from Zululand because of the mounting tensions there) that the British ought to intervene in some way. This general sentiment became more widespread when rumours, some of them greatly exaggerated, of lethal persecution of converts in Zululand began to circulate in Natal in 1877. In any case, in Witt's correspondence with the leaders of the SKM in 1877 he appears

to have discussed tensions in Zululand at length on only one occasion. That was in a letter of 19 December 1877, written in Greytown shortly after he had left the Ntumeni station. Witt emphasised that he would have preferred to remain in Zululand but that in effect that country was then closed to missionaries. He accused the British government of failing to respond promptly to persecutions there but believed that officials in Natal were belatedly beginning to show concern about the ostensibly deteriorating situation in the neighbouring country. How well Witt understood the terms of the agreement which the British had made with Cetshwayo in 1873 is unknown. At any rate, he was obviously resigned to doing missionary work at least temporarily in Natal rather than on the missionary frontier in Zululand. Witt understood that there was still a great need for outreach to the indigenes in Natal and pointed out that even in Greytown there were three churches and three clergymen for the Europeans but none for the Africans.[65]

In addition to the obvious suggestion of acquiring land immediately south of the Tugela, Witt proposed a second general area for the SKM, namely western Natal, much of which at that time had attracted only small numbers of missionaries. He appears to have favoured that area in 1877. If Witt was still in doubt about where to build a station, however, he was not at all uncertain about the style of living which he and his wife expected to have at it. He argued at great length for the erection of a European-style house on the anticipated premises. Witt considered requesting the purchase of such a partly built dwelling in Durban and having it transported in sections overland to the site of the station but abandoned the idea upon learning that the task would require at least fifteen ox wagons. In any case, he emphasised his unwillingness to inhabit a Kaffer-style hut for any length of time. On the contrary, Witt again asked the SKM to appropriate additional funds so that he and his wife would have a female servant in their home.[66]

In a related vein, Witt began late in 1877 to hint that he needed a higher salary from the SKM in order to support his growing family. (His second child, a son, was born in December of that year.) Writing from the central station of the Hermannsburg Mission that October shortly after leaving Schreuder's Ntumeni, he expressed sympathy for his German counterparts there because they had to engage in secular work in order to supplement their modest salaries. Witt did not directly

mention his own remuneration at that time, however.[67] In the meantime he had begun to inquire about the remuneration of missionaries in other societies. Some of them in effect supported his case. Dr James Dalzell of the Free Church of Scotland, who would soon be one of Witt's neighbours, wrote to him from his station in September 1877 in reply to a letter Witt had sent him earlier that month. The Scottish physician informed him that the Church of Scotland paid ordained missionaries £225 *per annum* and defrayed the cost of educating their children at Lovedale Institution in the Eastern Cape. On the other hand, Dalzell pointed out that he and his colleagues were not given free livestock and that they were required to purchase life insurance at their own expense. Dalzell concluded by defending the practice of paying university-educated men considerably more than artisans and farmers whom missionary societies employed. The training of the former, he argued, "is much more costly and their habits of life are much more expensive. . .". Dalzell therefore encouraged Witt to seek at least £200 *per annum*. The presence of this letter in the archives of the SKM in Uppsala indicates that Witt sent it to the steering committee in support of his plea for a higher salary.[68]

Before it had an opportunity to act on the looming question of salaries for its missionaries, the SKM steering committee had to deal suddenly with the unexpected purchase of what would soon become its Oscarsberg station at a cost significantly higher than it had authorised. From the viewpoint of the missionaries, this event did not occur so abruptly but was the result of a long search which had taken them through much of Natal. In August 1877 Witt and Flygare had made a fruitless exploratory journey to the vicinity of Biggarsberg in the shadow of the Drakensberg, and in October and November of that year Fristedt and Flygare trekked through vast expanses of the colony without finding a site on which the three men could agree. Early in January 1878 Witt and Flygare had visited north-western Natal briefly, and it was on this third sojourn that they found what they believed was a highly suitable site for a station.[69]

Witt wrote from Greytown in January 1878 to inform his superiors that he had bought 3 044 acres of land very near the Buffalo River south-east of Dundee and thus within walking distance of Zululand. He did not veil the fact that he had exceeded by £800 the limit of £1 000 which the SKM had imposed in giving him power of

attorney, but he sought to propitiate the assumed anger of the committee members by emphasising that the land included buildings worth at least £500. Had the SKM purchased a site without such structures, Witt reasoned, building them would have cost £600-700 and a year's time before evangelisation could have begun in earnest. He further attempted to paint the best possible face on the deal by mentioning that a ferry on the Buffalo River was included in the price and that the SKM could earn at least £100 annually carrying passengers on it when the river was in flood. Less exuberantly, Witt admitted that given the international tensions in Southern Africa the proximity of the site to Zululand might be a mixed blessing and that the immediately previous owner, a man named Robert Surtees, had been willing to dispose of the property because he feared impending hostilities.[70]

The terms of the sale to which Witt agreed were quite simple, although the young Swede felt it necessary to enlist the aid of another missionary to defend the purchase. On behalf of the SKM he made an initial cash payment of £500 in January 1878. A second, in the amount of £700, was due within six months. The remaining £600 was to be in the form of a mortgage bond on which the SKM would pay interest of 8 per cent.[71] All payments were to be made by 1 August 1879. Probably owing to the fact that the price grossly exceeded the limit which the steering committee had directed Witt to obey, he sent to it a complimentary letter which S.L. Döhne, a German counterpart, had written to him a week after the transfer became official. "There is, as far as I know, no better situation for a Mission-Station . . .", Döhne had declared, "since it contains the open door to the Zulu-Country". Döhne had tempered his enthusiasm only slightly by pointing out that had the SKM made the purchase two years earlier it could have acquired the property at a lower price.[72] That, of course, would not have been possible, because in January 1876 the SKM was not yet represented in Natal. In any case, Döhne's assertion is difficult to understand; Surtees reportedly was willing to sell the property partly because of the mounting tensions between that colony and Zululand.

In any case, the steering committee did not protest against Witt's taking the initiative in buying the site. Meeting on 1 March 1878, its members discussed his letter of 11 January and approved the purchase, noting especially the presence of buildings on the property. The committee postponed a decision to appropriate funds for the

acquisition of a second station, however, and appears to have believed that all three missionaries - Witt, Flygare, and Fristedt - would co-operate at the new site in the near future. At the time of the purchase Fristedt was still at Neu Hermannsburg learning Zulu and becoming acclimated to missionary life, while Flygare was spending part of his time in Durban doing some of the first Scandinavian urban missionary work in Southern Africa, although he also spent part of 1878 helping Witt establish Oscarsberg.[73] At the same meeting the committee fixed their annual salaries at £150 each for Witt and Flygare, both of whom were married and had children, and £100 for the bachelor Fristedt.[74] The protocols of its meeting do not contain any reference to the salaries which Scottish or other non-Swedish missionaries were receiving in Southern Africa.

After serving at Norwegian stations for approximately a year and a half, Witt took on the challenge of developing his own with obvious enthusiasm. The site which he had selected initially seemed very promising. Witt described the principal house on the property as being in good condition, and he believed that a second building could easily be transformed into a "comfortable schoolhouse". He also commented favourably on the orchard, which included figs, peaches, oranges, grapes, and other fruits. Apart from these features which no doubt appealed to his sense of well-being and seemed appropriate to a man with a small but growing family, the presence of many Zulus on or near the property gave him reason to believe that he had a nearly ideal setting in which to propagate the Gospel. From a large hill on the land, Witt could see "a large number of Kaffer kraals nearby, seven of which are located on the property". He did not state whether any of their inhabitants had previous exposure to Christianity. Combining Swedish nationalism with the tradition of the evangelisation of Scandinavia itself, Witt called the SKM's first station "Oscarsberg" after King Oscar II, who occupied the Swedish throne from 1872 until 1907. As Witt was aware, the name of that monarch, which was then very popular in Sweden, was derived from "Ansgar", the name of the Frankish Benedictine (801-865) who served as the archbishop of Hamburg and Bremen and sought with limited success to plant the Gospel in Scandinavia. Amongst the English-speaking people in Southern Africa, however, and in Britain, the station would soon be associated with the English name of a topographical feature of the nearby Buffalo River, namely Rorke's Drift.

The Umsinga Division, in which the site was located, had experienced economic tribulation in the 1870s, although conditions there were to brighten notably during the following decade. For a few years before Witt's arrival drought and resulting crop failures had wreaked havoc in the Tugela Valley. In 1878, however, a government official reported that at least at higher elevations rains had saved the harvest. Zulu agriculture, meanwhile, seemed to be improving, at least as reflected by a sharp increase in the number of ploughs which indigenous farmers owned. European farmers, on the other hand, reportedly concentrated on the production of livestock. One natural asset, this official noted in 1878, was the presence of "fish, in excellent quality, size, and in abundance, in Tugela and Buffalo Rivers, also in Mooi River".[75]

More disturbingly, crime appears to have increased during the late 1870s and early 1880s, if statistics of the number of people arrested or summoned in the Umsinga Division are an even remotely accurate index. In 1878 207 people were arrested or summoned there. This figure rose to 248 in 1879, 356 in 1880, and 415 in 1881. The causes for this increase of 100 per cent in three years are not apparent. Magistrate Henry F. Fynn, far from describing the Zulu population as violent or anarchic, generalised in 1881 that "the natives are well behaved, pay their taxes most readily, and appreciate British rule". Fynn estimated the indigenous population of the division at 26 518, 150 of whom he described as "Kolwas, or semi-civilized natives" who did not live in conventional huts.[76] In his extant correspondence, Witt had very little to say about crime near Oscarsberg.

Another disturbing element in the vicinity and, for that matter, in other parts of Natal, was the presence of large numbers of uncontrolled dogs. In 1879 a law was enacted which compelled owners to register them and pay an annual fee. Fynn reported in 1880 that "the Law had the desired effect of large numbers of dogs being destroyed throughout this district. . .".[77] The relevance to Witt of this seeming curiosity will become evident in Chapter III.

From the outset, Witt understood that his position some ten minutes' walk from Zululand was precarious and potentially dangerous. He assured supporters in Sweden that he and his wife were going to develop a station regardless of possible threats to their own safety. Witt reasoned that he had little choice but to accept some risk, because the unrest in Cetshwayo's domain could last for another forty years and

it was therefore unrealistic to wait until that king's death before undertaking missionary work near the border of Zululand. By then the young Swede had become more critical in his view of British policy. "The English do not wish to take any decisive action to put an end to his [i.e. Cetshwayo's] cruelties and his constant irritations against the colony", he lamented. Witt expressed confidence that should British military forces cross the Tugela and Buffalo rivers, one-half of Cetshwayo's subjects would support the intervention and turn against their king. On the other hand, he chastised Colenso, whose pro-Zulu sentiments were well-known in missionary circles, for contributing to the divisions in British settler ranks. Drawing an unrecognisable caricature of Colenso's undeniably controversial theology, the Swedish Lutheran accused him of being "a thorough-going rationalist, denying the divinity of Christ, denying eternal punishment of the damned, and indeed denying the existence of a personal God".[78]

Attempting Swedish Missionary Colonisation

Shortly before the SKM acquired the property which would become its Oscarsberg station, Witt and his colleagues gave serious consideration to the possibility of promoting Swedish emigration to Natal. The Hermannsburg Mission, active in that colony since the 1850s, had consistently encouraged rural Hannoverian Germans who wished to emigrate to accompany its missionaries to the field. Linking emigration with missionary work helped to ensure financial support for the latter. It also gave emigrating German Protestants the alternative of remaining in intact communities in which ordained men were present to attend to their spiritual needs. This gave the Hermannsburgers a high degree of unity and nurtured the retention of their northern German culture. The Hermannsburg plan undoubtedly served as a model for the Swedish missionaries who sought to encourage prospective emigrants in Sweden to join them in the African sub-continent rather than sail to less exotic North American shores.

The colonial government of Natal provided the opportunity for considering such an experiment. For decades prior to the 1870s it had co-operated sporadically with

various emigration schemes to overcome a perceived problem of European underpopulation. The success of these undertakings was never impressive, but in 1875 colonial authorities renewed their efforts to attract more white settlers. An enquiry revealed that year that only about 20 per cent of the land in Natal remained unallotted and that much that was privately owned lay fallow. Assuming that unclaimed Crown lands and private holdings made available for purchase or rent would suffice to support a considerable increase in population, the government of Natal created a Land and Immigration Board, also known as the European Immigration Board, which began to function in 1878.

How the Swedish missionaries learnt of these renewed endeavours is not known. They may simply have read about them in the newspapers. In any event, the creation of the Land and Immigration Board probably seemed timely, because the flow of Swedish emigrants to the United States of America had dwindled since 1873 because of a severe recession in that country. Economic factors continued to place pressure on the population in Sweden, however, forcing many dispossessed Swedes to cast about for other lands to which they could emigrate. Witt and Fristedt, who had left Sweden in 1876 and 1877, respectively, could not have been unaware of this dilemma. They therefore wrote to Sir Henry Bulwer (1836-1914), the lieutenant governor of Natal, in late December 1878 and offered to assist in the scheme. We "propose to bring out from Sweden a large number of our countrymen - tradesmen and agriculturists, with their families, persons who bear a good character, part of whom will probably be selected from our own flocks, whose pastors we have been", they declared. They requested Bulwer to designate an area on the Natal South Coast near the Umzimkulu River for Swedish settlement. The two pastors asked the government to grant each of at least fifty families 250 acres of land at no cost except those of surveying and the transfer of the deeds. They asked Bulwer whether free passage from either Sweden or England to Natal could be provided and whether the immigrants could also be given a week's board and lodging in Durban and funds to defray part of the cost of transport from there to the settlement to ease the adjustment to their new land. In return, Witt and Fristedt assured him that the Swedes would be responsible for their own welfare and the education of their children.[79]

Colonial Secretary Frederick Napier Broome (1842-1896) replied promptly, assuring Witt and Fristedt that the Board was indeed interested in their proposal. He could not, however, make any promises regarding the size of the farms which would be available or the terms which would obtain, and he remained silent on the matter of assisted passage to Natal.[80]

C.A. Butler, the secretary of the Land and Immigration Board, wrote to the two Swedes ten days later, after he and his colleagues had considered their petition. He informed them that their request was "of somewhat too excessive a character" to be approved. Butler encouraged them not to abandon their plans, however, and suggested that if grants of 100 acres per family and a commonage of 2 000 acres for each fifty families would be deemed sufficient for Swedish immigrants the Board would probably be able to assist them. The secretary concluded by requesting information about how and when they proposed to transport Swedes to Natal and whether they anticipated one large body of settlers travelling together or a gradual emigration.[81]

The Swedish missionaries and the Land and Immigration Board had thus reached at least a temporary impasse. The two Swedes replied to Butler before the end of January and declared that the terms he had proposed for land tenure were "almost impossible" to accept. As an alternative, they proposed that the Board give each family 100 acres and establish a commonage of 4 000 acres for each fifty families. They also requested a separate glebe for the pastor of their projected settlement. The two insisted that they be given the right to select the land themselves and that more acres would be made available if necessary. With regard to passages for the Swedes to Natal, Witt and Fristedt assured Butler that they would arrange it in the most economical way possible, which they believed would be to have all the emigrants sail together in one ship directly from Sweden without calling at any port in England. Finally, they asked Butler to appropriate £200 to defray the cost of one Swedish missionary returning temporarily to Sweden to arrange the actual emigration.[82]

Precisely what happened then is not known. While this exchange of letters was taking place, Witt had arranged for the purchase of the first SKM station, and undoubtedly he was preoccupied with that transaction. Neither he nor his colleagues abandoned their proposal, however. Witt, Fristedt, and Flygare met at Oscarsberg

in March and agreed that Flygare serve as their "agent for a certain period for the purpose of bringing out the immigrants". They informed the Land and Immigration Board of this decision.[83] In the meantime Flygare, whose earlier service in the Hermannsburg Mission had given him extensive exposure to missionary colonisation, wrote to the steering committee of the SKM about the proposal. At its meeting on 29 April, the committee considered his description of the scheme but decided cryptically not to take action on it.[84] This in effect may have ended the possibility of the SKM becoming directly involved in the promotion of emigration to Natal. Before the committee made that decision, however, Witt wrote to it to declare that he no longer wished to participate in an emigration scheme even if satisfactory terms could be secured from the Land and Immigration Board. He explained that he was then preoccupied with the development of Oscarsberg far from the Natal South Coast, and that it would therefore not be feasible for him to divide his time and energy between the two projects. Witt stated that Flygare, who had not been in Sweden for many years, wished to carry on with the scheme, however, and suggested that Flygare be given funds to return there temporarily to recruit emigrants. Witt argued that this could be a good investment for the SKM, as Flygare could thereby stimulate popular interest in the new field in Natal by preaching in various locales.[85]

Before ending his personal involvement in the emigration scheme, Witt submitted to the SKM a proposal for recruiting emigrants for a missionary colony. He stated explicitly that the Hermannsburg Mission should serve as a model in this undertaking. Witt suggested that the SKM advertise the scheme as its own. It should emphasise that Natal was an "English [sic] colony with proper government, as in any other Christian country". Moreover, prospective colonists should be assured that they would have favourable economic conditions and Suedophone schools for their children. Witt proposed that interested Swedes be told to submit their applications directly to the SKM and include with them statements from their pastors that they were people of "serious and Christian conduct".[86] By the time the SKM received Witt's proposal, however, its steering committee had decided against participation in emigration schemes. Thus ended what could have been a significant dimension in Swedish missions history, one which might have made the SKM one of the larger societies for the propagation of the Gospel in Southern Africa, though only if optimal

conditions had obtained. In all likelihood, however, even active participation by the SKM would not have stimulated a large number of prospective Swedish emigrants to choose Natal as their adopted land. By 1880 the economic situation in the United States of America and Canada had improved markedly, and in response to that improvement Swedish emigration to North America had begun to surge anew. Very few Swedes thought it necessary to risk their futures in ostensibly exotic Africa when they could be virtually assured of employment and either free or inexpensive land amongst large numbers of their countrymen who had previously settled in several northern areas of the prosperous American Midwest.

It might be enlightening to point out that in 1882 a party of approximately 230 Norwegian emigrants accepted an offer from the Land and Immigration Board to settle near Port Shepstone on the Natal South Coast. Their hopes of developing a distinctively Norwegian community there were never fulfilled. Within a few years insurmountable economic obstacles, especially the general absence of employment opportunities and a satisfactory market for agricultural produce, compelled more than half of the original settlers to leave the Port Shepstone area.[87] There is little reason to believe that a better fate would have befallen Swedish settlers there. Furthermore, it is implausible that the SKM would have had sufficient personnel to have made a significant difference in the spiritual environment of such immigrants while simultaneously conducting vigorous efforts to evangelise Zulus near Port Shepstone and at Oscarsberg.

Conclusion

In retrospect, it seems clear that during his first two years in Africa Witt's conduct foreshadowed certain later developments. His attitude towards people from cultural backgrounds radically different from his own appears not to have been entirely beneficial for work amongst them, if his comments about Egyptians and, to a lesser extent, Zulus, are representative. As will be seen in the following chapters, at times Witt's relations with the indigenes near Oscarsberg and, ultimately, his attitude towards social and educational work among them differed greatly from those which the SKM

found acceptable. Furthermore, his inability to work harmoniously with Schreuder over a long period of time pointed to strained relations between Witt and his colleagues in the SKM. He was a strong-willed if physically small and sensitive man, and at times his behaviour would prove more volitional than rational. Yet by all accounts Witt was also a hard-working missionary whose commitment to his task drove him to devote long hours to it. He did not shy away from challenges which pioneer life in what by bourgeois Swedish standards were remote parts of Southern Africa posed, although as we shall see he continued to demand certain material comforts which his superiors in Sweden were not always in a position to provide. For the most part, Witt served obediently for the first few years of his career in the field, rarely departing from the loose guidelines which the SKM had given him for his task. In that respect, he would begin to change by 1879 and remain somewhat inconsistent during the 1880s, which would be a turbulent decade for him. His theological views would also undergo a great transformation in the 1880s, but of this there was no recorded hint during his initial period of adjustment to missionary life in Natal.

Notes

1. Hjalmar Holmquist, *Handbok i svensk kyrkohistoria*. III. *Från romantiken till världskriget* (Stockholm, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1941), pp. 19-22.

2. Sven Lodin, *Carl Olof Rosenius. Hans liv och förkunnelse* (Stockholm, Fosterlandsstiftensen, 1922) is the standard biography.

3. Holmquist, *Från romantiken till världskriget*, p. 33.

4. For Fjellstedt's role in fostering a foreign missionary impulse in Sweden, see Carl Anshelm, *Peter Fjellstedt*. II. *Hans verksamhet i hemlandet för den yttre missionen* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1935). The standard work in English is Emmet E. Eklund's brief but helpful *Peter Fjellstedt: Missionary Mentor to Three Continents* (Rock Island: Augustana Historical Society, 1983).

5. For a convenient survey of the theological liberalism of Ignell and Rydberg, see Edvard Rodhe, *Den religiösa liberalismen. Nils Ignell -Viktor Rydberg - Pontus Wikner* (Stockholm, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1935).

6. For the history of the controversy, see Ernst Newman, *Den Waldenströmska försoningsläran i historisk belysning* (Stockholm, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1932).

7. Arthur Sundstedt, *Striden om konventikelplakatet* (Stockholm, Filadelfia, 1958) is the standard history.

8. Gunnar Westin, *Den kristna friförsamling i Norden. Frikyrklighetens uppkomst och utveckling* (Stockholm, Westerberg, 1858) chronicles the general unfolding of religious nonconformity in Scandinavia.

9. J. Byström, *En frikyrklig banbrytare eller F.L. Nilssons lif och verksamhet* (Stockholm, Tryckningskommitténs förlagsexpedition, 1910) is the standard but antiquated biography.

10. The standard biography of Waldenström's early career is W. Bredberg, *P.P. Waldenströms verksamhet till 1878* (Stockholm, Missionsförbundet, 1949).

11. Bengt Sundkler, *Svenska Missionssällskapet 1835-1876* (Uppsala, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1937), *passim*. Sundkler's detailed monograph remains the standard treatment of the SMS.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 605.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 471-486.

14. Tore Furberg, *Kyrka och mission i Sverige 1868-1901* (Uppsala, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962), p. 87.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 442.

16. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt, "Sjelfbiografi".

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. Otto Witt, *Märkliga livserfarenheter. Minnen ur det flydda* (Stockholm, privately published, 1922), p. 6.

20. Witt, "Sjelfbiografi".

21. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, "Utdrag ur protocoll i theologiska faculteten d. 27 Sept. 1873".

22. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, "Utdrag ur protocoll i theologiska faculteten d. 18 Maj 1874".

23. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, excerpt of records from Kungl. Seminarium för bildande af lärorinnor pertaining to Elin Pallin.

24. H.A. Witt (Helsingborg) to T.N. Hasselquist, 14 September 1870, in Gunnar Westin (ed.), *Emigrantarna och kyrkan. Brev från och till svenskar i Amerika 1849-1922* (Stockholm, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1932), pp. 282-283.

25. Berndt Gustafsson, *Svensk kyrkohistoria* (Stockholm, Verbum, 1957), p. 183.

26. Benkt Olén, "Johan Henrik Hägglund", in Gunnar Carlquist (ed.), *Lunds stifts herdaminne*. Series II. *Biografier*. X, *Åsbo och Bjäre kontrakt* (Lund: Klippan, 1985), pp.389-394.

27. P. Rydholm, "Henric Schartau - ett hundrafemtioårsminne", *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift*, IX (1908), xxi-xxii.

28. Gustaf Lindeberg, *Ett sekel i missionens tjänst. Lunds Missionssällskap 1845-1945* (Lund, C.W.K. Gleerup, 1945), pp. 153-161.

29. Witt, *Märkliga livserfarenheter*, p. 7.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

32. Witt, "Sjelfbiografi".

33. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelse Protokoll 1874-1883*, 19 May 1875.

34. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelse Protokoll 1874-1883*, 1 July 1875.

35. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Helsingborg) to Anton Niklas Sundberg, 23 November 1875.

36. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 4, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, A.N. Sundberg (Uppsala) to Adolf Sjöding, 28 November 1875.

37. The standard biography is Carl Anshelm, *Biskop Hans Peter Hallbeck* (Lund, C.W.K. Gleerups Förlag, 1927).

38. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Untunjambili Mission Station) to Church of Sweden Mission steering committee, 30 May 1876.

39. Otto Witt (Basel) to *Missions-Tidning*, 15 February 1876, in *Missions-Tidning*, I, no. 2 (1876), pp. 28-31.

40. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Alexandria) to unspecified uncle, 7 March 1876.

41. Otto Witt (Aden) to *Missions-Tidning*, 23 March 1876, in *Missionstidning*, I, no. 5 (1876), pp. 71-75.

42. Otto Witt (Untunjambili Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 30 May 1876, in *Missions-Tidning*, I, no. 8 (1876), pp. 125-126.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

44. Witt, *Märkliga livserfarenheter*, p. 12.

45. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, H. Schreuder (Untunjambili Mission Station) to Archbishop A.N. Sundberg, 15 January 1877.

46. H. Schreuder (Ntumeni Mission Station) to Mission Committee, 6 June 1877, in *Missionsblad*, II (September 1877), pp. 21-23.

47. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Ntumeni Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 8 June 1877.

48. Norwegian Missionary Society Archives, Schreuder Mission, box 22, folder 2, C.M. Fallenius (unspecified provenance) to H.P.S. Schreuder, 2 June 1877.

49. Norwegian Missionary Society Archives, Schreuder Mission, box 22, folder 2, A.N. Sundberg (Uppsala) to H.P.S. Schreuder, 19 November 1877.

50. For a brief synopsis of Flygare's career prior to his joining the SKM, see "Våra hemgångna missionsarbetare", *Tillkomme ditt rike*, II (Uppsala, Almquist & Wiksells Boktrykkeri A.-B., 1907), pp. 6-10.

51. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, C.L. Flygare, "Biografi", 14 February 1877.

52. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 4 May 1877.

53. F.L. Fristedt (Neu Hermannsburg) to *Missions-Tidning*, 28 September 1878, in *Missions-Tidning*, II, nos. 10-11 (1877), pp. 228-235.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 243-244.

55. Otto Witt (Ntumeni Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 10 October 1876, in *Missions-Tidning*, II, no. 1 (1877), pp. 19-21.

56. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Ntumeni Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 10 October 1876.

57. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Ntumeni Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 30 December 1876.

58. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Ntumeni Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 8 June 1877.

59. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Ntumeni Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 17 September 1877.

60. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 2 June 1877.

61. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, 61. *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, H. Schreuder (Ntumeni Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 24 August 1877.

62. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 29 April 1878.

63. Olav Guttorm Myklebust, *H.P.S. Schreuder. Kirke og misjon* (Oslo, Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1980), pp. 248-250.

64. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1873*, 2 June 1877.

65. Otto Witt (Greytown) to *Missions-Tidning*, 19 December 1877, in *Missions-Tidning*, III, no. 2 (1878), pp. 33-35.

66. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Styrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Ntumeni Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 17 September 1877.

67. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Hermannsburg) to SKM Steering Committee, 29 October 1877.

68. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, James Dalzell (unspecified provenance) to Otto Witt, 28 September 1877.

69. C.L. Flygare (Durban) to *Missions-Tidning*, 31 December 1878, in *Missions-Tidning*, IV, no. 5 (1879), p. 100.

70. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Greytown) to SKM Steering Committee, 11 January 1878.

71. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, "Declaration of seller", 8 January 1878.

72. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, S.L. Döhne (Kirkland) to Otto Witt, 18 January 1878.

73. Flygare to *Missions-Tidning*, 31 December 1878, p. 101.

74. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 1 March 1878.

75. *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal. 1878* (Pietermaritzburg, Vause, Slatter, & Co., Government Printers, 1879), p. JJ 17.

76. *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal. 1881* (Pietermaritzburg, Vause, Slatter & Co., Government Printers, 1882), p. GG 51.

77. *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal. 1880* (Pietermaritzburg, Vause, Slatter & Co., Government Printers, 1881), p. JJ 115.

78. Otto Witt (Natal) to *Missions-Tidning*, 2 February 1878, in *Missions-Tidning*, III, no. 3 (1878), pp. 58-664.

79. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt and F.L. Fristedt (Greytown) to Sir Henry Bulwer, 28 December 1877.

80. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, F. Napier Broome (Pietermaritzburg) to O. Witt and F.L. Fristedt, 9 January 1878.

81. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor til Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, F. Napier Broome (Pietermaritzburg) to Otto Witt and F.L. Fristedt, 19 January 1878.

82. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt and F.L. Fristedt (Greytown) to C.A. Butler, 29 January 1878.

83. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, C.L. Flygare (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to European Immigration Board, 22 March 1878.

84. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 29 April 1878.

85. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 22 March 1878.

86. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt, "Förslag till uppmaning till kolonisation".

87. For a detailed discussion of this colonisation endeavour, see Frederick Hale, "The History of Norwegian Missionaries and Immigrants in South Africa" (Doctor of Literature and Philosophy thesis, University of South Africa, 1986), Chapter V.

CHAPTER III

WITT AND THE ANGLO-ZULU WAR OF 1879

Establishing Oscarsberg

The Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 gave the history of Southern Africa one of its most dramatic and consequential chapters by setting the stage for the eventual destruction of the Zulu kingdom as a sovereign land. At the same time, it nearly snuffed out the SKM's endeavours in Natal before Witt and his colleagues could bring the light of the Gospel to more than a small number of Zulus. Witt and, for a short time, Flygare laboured arduously in 1878 to transform what had been the Surtees farm near Rorke's Drift into the first SKM station in Africa. The long-awaited eruption of open hostilities between Zululand and Natal in January 1879 soon led to the devastation of Oscarsberg. However traumatic that event may have been to the missionaries in question and their sponsors in Sweden, it was only the most obviously destructive of several events which threatened the SKM's existence in the region. Beneath the sensational surface, tensions between Witt and his colleagues came to the fore during the war, as they did between Witt and the steering committee of the SKM. These personal conflicts, coupled with the practical tribulations which military hostilities caused, forced the SKM to suspend most of its budding activities in Natal. Deepening the crisis, Witt sailed back to England and from there to Sweden without first obtaining permission from his steering committee to leave the field. In London he made numerous public remarks which antagonised many British settlers in Natal and especially the daily press in that colony. This led to acrimonious feelings against the SKM and made it difficult for him to return and re-establish a station after the war. All in all it was a highly critical period in the young history of the mission, one which nearly caused it to die in infancy.

In fairness to Witt and his colleagues, it should be emphasised that the tense late 1870s were a most inauspicious time for undertaking missionary work amongst the Zulus. Ommund Oftebro (1820-1893), the superintendent of the Norwegian Missionary Society's southern African field, graphically described in 1879 the deterioration

of relations between Zululand and Natal during the stormy three-year period which began approximately when Witt arrived in that colony: "In 1876 the thunder clouds began to accumulate; it 1877 they became thicker and it began to thunder; and at the end of 1878 it began to pour down". Oftebro was writing from the important Norwegian station at Eshowe in Zululand, a venue which had been the scene of severe hostilities during the war. Nevertheless, events had proven that there was no security on the frontier at Oscarsberg. Both immediately before and during the war that station was either extremely close to negotiations and manoeuvres or at the centre of military action. It was under these circumstances that Witt and Flygare launched evangelistic work at Oscarsberg.

There are not many sources of information about their endeavours at that new station in 1878. At times during his career in the SKM Witt reported frequently to its steering committee in Uppsala and wrote lengthy letters to *Missions-Tidning.* In 1878, however, he was apparently too preoccupied with building up Oscarsberg to record much about his activities there. The few sources which exist, however, shed a considerable amount of light on both successful and unsuccessful methods Witt employed in propagating the Gospel, his attitudes towards the Zulus, and his observations of relations between Natal and Zululand.

After about seven months at Oscarsberg, Witt described his work there. In most respects it appears to have resembled that at other new stations, especially those of the Norwegian Missionary Society. It is generally accepted that prior to the Anglo-Zulu War missionaries to the Zulus exercised their greatest influence on their employees and other indigenes who resided at or very near their stations. If this is correct, then Witt's early experience at Oscarsberg seems to have been quite typical. In August 1878 he reported that he had four "Kaffers" in his service. As was the case at other stations, Witt emphasised education as a primary means of influencing them at Oscarsberg. He wrote that he taught his four employees both in the morning and in the evening, and that his instruction of them also served as a primary means of evangelisation. Witt taught them to read and write their own language, partly by using texts from the Old and New Testaments. That means of combining religious and secular instruction was in vogue in Scandinavia until well into the nineteenth century, especially in pietistic circles, so it was hardly innovative for northern European

missionaries to employ it. At times Witt's instructional hours resembled services of worship, as he gave brief interpretations of the Bible stories which his pupils read and concluded the lessons with prayer and singing. "I have thus now gone through the first three gospels", he reported in August.

These four employees at Oscarsberg typified the kinds of Zulus then resident at many mission stations and represented several of the difficulties against which missionaries had to contend during that early period. The first, a young man named Diki, had been baptised at what Witt called an "English" station in Zululand, although he did not specify the location and denominational affiliation of that establishment. Obviously dissatisfied with Diki's spiritual condition, Witt wrote that he "had received good instruction in carpentry but little in the truths of Christianity". Since his baptism, the young convert had married in a traditional Zulu ceremony a woman who had been given some instruction in Christianity and baptised at a German mission station. The couple had left Zululand and settled near Rorke's Drift in 1877. When Witt established Oscarsberg, they had requested permission to reside at it, although whether this was to escape ostracism and possible persecution the Swede did not mention. In any case, Witt was initially reluctant to comply with their wish. "As a matter of principle I do not take in baptised people from other stations", he assured his supporters in Sweden, "but in this case I made an exception". Precisely why Witt compromised his acceptance of this unwritten rule of comity he did not explain. Perhaps he simply needed the man's carpentry skills. In any case, Witt hired Diki early in 1878, initially for a probationary period of four months. At the end of that time Witt, "completely satisfied" with Diki, allowed him, his wife, and their two baptised children to remain at Oscarsberg on the condition that they attend his school and learn Luther's *Small Catechism* and anything else that he chose to teach them. "As soon as I have brought them so far that I can admit them to the Lord's table I intend to marry them", Witt wrote.

The second employee, to use the term liberally, exemplified other difficulties which confronted missionaries. A youth about thirteen years of age named Getle, he had come from a kraal near Oscarsberg and asked Witt to give him employment. Witt had acceded to this request, even though Getle was, in his words, "sickly" and had injured his back in an accident. By August 1878 the Zulu boy had begun to

fulfil Witt's expectations that if he could not perform physical labour at least he could learn and become a Christian. An impediment to this, however, was a phenomenon which had long been a *Leitmotiv* in missionary reports from Natal and Zululand, namely familial opposition. "The frequent visits of his mother did not bode well", Witt wrote. "Eventually she came and demanded to take him home in order to have the black witch-doctors treat him". When the Swede forbade that, she had taken her son by the hand and begun to lead him away. Only Witt's threats to inform the police caused the woman to flee, leaving Getle at the station.

The third employee was even younger, a boy of seven or eight years whose father owned a kraal on the Oscarsberg property. Witt had little to say about the youth but described him as "a kind and modest little boy, the most gifted of my pupils". The youth was given the task of herding the cattle at the station.

The fourth employee stayed at Oscarsberg for only a short time. A girl named Satlukene, she initially gave Witt reason to hope that she would convert to Christianity. He wrote that not only her behaviour but also her appearance changed after she came to the station. Moreover, Satlukene herself declared that the Word of God was gaining access to her heart. Witt lamented, though, that she had then unexpectedly informed him of her intention to marry a polygamous non-Christian. His efforts to dissuade her came to naught, and in August 1878 she was on the verge of leaving Oscarsberg.

In addition to these four employees whom Witt taught in the morning and evening, he sought to instruct approximately a dozen children in the afternoon. Witt admitted that his pedagogical endeavours had not borne much fruit. "They are not only slow to understand, but also poor in attendance", he complained. "In order to get them here, I have to ride around to all the Kaffer kraals and fetch them myself. . . . This is a matter which puts my patience to a hard test". After several frustrating months, Witt could report that those who attended could at least recognise the letters of the Roman alphabet. Little else had sunk in, even though two of the children had been baptised, one as an infant, before coming to Oscarsberg. At first he had sought to stimulate the pupils' interest by telling and retelling them stories from the Bible, but he had abandoned that strategy when it seemed that the children gained nothing from them. On one occasion Witt had asked them to whom people should turn when

they needed help. When they replied "the snakes", he decided to modify his pedagogy radically. Witt had then sought to impart basic Christian doctrine by teaching them the Apostles' Creed.

To Witt and the SKM in general, however, educational work was merely a means to an end during the nineteenth century. The central task was the proclamation of the Gospel, and one goal was the creation of an indigenous church. Steps toward its attainment were being taken in 1878. It is not known how many converts or their children Witt and his colleagues baptised at that time; statistical reports in the SKM unfortunately do not antedate the Anglo-Zulu War. In any case, Witt lost little time before beginning weekly services on Sundays. In August 1878 he reported that generally between seventy and eighty people attended them. Only a few of these people did not reside on the 3 044 acres of land which the SKM had purchased. Witt initially held services either in the building which he and his wife used as a manse or, weather permitting, *al fresco*. The second building on the property, which he and Flygare foresaw employing as a chapel, was at first difficult to use as such because it lacked windows. Witt described his liturgy as including hymns, prayer, reading of the epistle and gospel texts, and a sermon. Missing were such elements as the confession of sins and absolution. He assured his supporters in his homeland, however, that as soon as the out-building could be converted into a chapel he intended to conduct services "completely in accordance with the ritual of the Church of Sweden". Witt found the behaviour of those in attendance gratifying. "They listen quietly to the sermon, which I always relate to the gospel or epistle text, and some of them are very attentive".

Witt also did missionary work away from Oscarsberg during 1878. He reported that an Englishman who resided approximately an hour's ride from the station had requested him to conduct services at his house, where a Norwegian missionary who had evacuated Zululand had temporarily preached during his exile from that country. Witt occasionally conducted services at Oscarsberg on Sunday mornings and rode to that farm to do so again in the afternoon, although this arrangement does not appear to have endured very long. During the week he supplemented his ministry by visiting people at their kraals. This form of outreach also took him across the Buffalo River into Zululand.

Witt, like virtually every other missionary who sought to evangelise Zulus during the nineteenth century, experienced frustrations and other difficulties from the outset. One of his first major defeats involved an African man and his large family who moved from the Transvaal to the area of Oscarsberg and requested permission to reside at the station. Although he had no fewer than eleven wives and forty-five children, this individual initially made a positive impression on Witt, who described both him and his clan in highly favourable terms and contrasted their behaviour and personalities with those of the Zulus. The enthusiastic Swede found it most gratifying that they desired baptism, but he soon learnt Ungoklo had been accused of various capital crimes, including murder. According to rumours which circulated in the vicinity, Ungoklo's misdeeds extended to excising the hearts of his victims and using them for medicinal purposes as a witch-doctor. Witt, believing that the accusations were probably untrue and in any case unproven, nevertheless decided to let Ungoklo and his family settle at Oscarsberg. At that point, however, the Zulus who already resided there threatened to leave if that were permitted. Witt therefore put Ungoklo to the test by asking him whether he would be willing to leave his family at Oscarsberg and go to another station to receive instruction in Christianity for a year. Ungoklo agreed to this, but the magistrate in the district refused to approve the arrangement. The disappointed Witt had to witness this potential addition to his congregation cross the Buffalo River to seek permission from Cetshwayo to stay in Zululand.[1]

The steering committee of the SKM appears to have been satisfied with Witt's performance at Oscarsberg in 1878. Their only source of information about it was his correspondence to them; both Flygare and Fristedt were away from the station after April of that year. It is not known what kind of expectations the members of the committee had at the outset. In any case Oscarsberg was a functioning station for only a few months between the time when the committee learnt that the SKM had a station and the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War. The few actions which they took regarding its governance were thus understandably weak and for the most part rather vague. In October 1878, for example, the committee moved that Witt should submit reports on the administration of the station, including agricultural endeavours there. Indicative of the confidence the members of the committee had in Witt at

that stage, they declared that as the first missionary of the SKM in Southern Africa he should have responsibility for its economic affairs in that field. They also decided to ask him for his opinion of the desirability of sending an agriculturalist from Sweden to manage the actual farming on the land which the SKM had purchased.[2] It is significant, however, that neither Witt nor either of his colleagues in the Southern African field was designated its superintendent. The SKM simply did not have even a poorly defined chain of command there. Within months the lack of such a structure caused serious problems, as we shall see shortly. But without officially conferring on him power over Flygare and Fristedt, the steering committee gave Witt a virtually free hand, though very little money, to administer Oscarsberg in 1878. That the station, and indeed the SKM's efforts in Southern Africa in general, barely survived that year few could have foreseen.

Personal Tensions between Witt and His Colleagues

To the steering committee, it probably seemed natural for Witt to serve as the *de facto* head of the SKM's mission field in Southern Africa. To Flygare and Fristedt, however, that decision was less obvious. Well before the end of 1878 they had ceased to co-operate harmoniously with him, and until the early 1880s these two missionaries locked horns almost constantly with their younger colleague. At times their verbal duels were highly acrimonious and must have caused many headaches in Uppsala and Stockholm amongst members of the committee who were deeply concerned about the future of their mission in a war-torn field. The nature of the controversies sheds light on Witt, his relations with his fellow Swedish missionaries, and the difficulties which the SKM endured in gaining a firm foothold in Natal. It is therefore necessary to examine at least the most central disputes.

Flygare appears to have been the protagonist. Alluding, curiously enough, to relations between Jacob and Esau in Genesis 32, he wrote to the steering committee in September 1878 what must have been a disconcerting letter in which he protested against its decision to confer economic responsibility (and, by inference, some measure of control over the other Swedish missionaries) on Witt. Instead of having any one

man in a position of authority above the other men and the field in general, Flygare suggested, "each and every station here must be allowed to be governed independently by the missionary who is stationed at it". More provocatively, Flygare cited John 8:44 to justify making the same point. Flygare made it clear that he feared a unified command of the field under Witt would be destructive and asserted that some measure of autonomy was preferable in the short term. The Lord, Flygare believed, would eventually provide unity after other problems had been resolved. He asserted that Fristedt was in agreement with him in this regard.

Not until after making these points did Flygare begin to explain how tensions had arisen between Witt and himself. The two principal incidents which he cited involved his criticism of Witt and the latter's apparent unwillingness to accept such criticism. The first was that at some undisclosed time Flygare had challenged Witt to handle the SKM's funds in a more frugal manner. "He was in great need of such an admonition", wrote Flygare, "but it only embittered him". The second clash had occurred when Flygare expressed disagreement with Witt's allegedly "untrue account" of the flight of German missionaries from Zululand in 1877. Possibly influenced by Schreuder's public criticism of his former colleagues in the Norwegian Missionary Society for joining the exodus from Cetshwayo's turbulent kingdom that year, Witt had written to *Missions-Tidning* about the persecutions of Zulu converts there and criticised German missionaries for leaving their congregations.[3] Flygare, apparently still sympathetic to his erstwhile colleagues in the Hermannsburg Mission, had confronted Witt about this and contended that Witt had greatly exaggerated the number of Germans who had left the Zululand field. Flygare also thought that his fellow Swede had unfairly claimed that the Germans had deserted their congregations in Zululand and argued that in fact the converts had left the country before their white pastors.

Flygare thus explained why relations between himself and Witt were not good, although how these incidents should have disqualified the latter from exercising the financial responsibility which the steering committee had bestowed upon him was not yet clear. Flygare handled that matter by claiming that Witt was not used to frugality (a charge which could hardly have been denied, given Witt's propensity for moderate luxury) whereas Fristedt was. Concluding his argument against Witt,

Flygare asserted that having only two years' experience amongst Zulus Witt needed more preparation in their language.[4]

A few weeks later Flygare wrote again to the steering committee about a site he hoped the SKM would purchase for a station at which to place him. He stated that anticipating moving from Durban, he had asked to borrow Witt's oxen but been refused. Moreover, Witt had just suggested that Flygare take over Oscarsberg so that he himself could establish a second station elsewhere. Flygare opposed this proposal, and informed the steering committee that it probably reflected the fact that Witt had antagonised some of the Africans at Oscarsberg. Why should someone else have to live with the results of Witt's mistakes, he argued. If Witt left Oscarsberg to found another station, he would merely repeat his errors there.[5]

In December Flygare and Fristedt jointly submitted an annual report to the steering committee. The two men were not serving at any station; indeed, neither of them had a station, but they were both in Durban awaiting the outbreak of war while Witt was still at Oscarsberg. Flygare and Fristedt declared that they were "fully competent" to manage their own financial affairs and repeated their belief that Witt should not have authority over them, because "he cannot even administer his own station". To substantiate this assertion, the two Swedes sent to the steering committee a lengthy excerpt from a letter which Döhne of the Berlin Mission had written to Flygare the previous month. This document contained startling statements. "I am not surprised that Pastor Witt wants to leave Oscarsberg", wrote Döhne. "He has made himself completely hated amongst all the Kaffers in the area. What has especially contributed to this is that he went to the kraals and shot the people's dogs!" The German missionary added that according to a current rumour Witt had also killed a Zulu girl. He asserted that this was not true, however, and attributed it to hysteria in connection with the shooting of the dogs at one kraal. In addition to a lack of sensitivity to the Zulu personality, Döhne thought that Witt was not properly equipped with an understanding of practical matters for managing a station. He was especially critical of the Swede's mistakes in repairing the buildings at Oscarsberg. Döhne did not conceal his belief that Witt was unsuited to missionary work: "I believe that Pastor Witt would do better to return to Sweden and take a position there", he declared.[6]

Before the steering committee could consider Fristedt's and Flygare's grievances, however, the Anglo-Zulu War had broken out. That parts of Southern Africa were in turmoil was soon known in Sweden, largely through the British press, which the daily newspapers in Stockholm and other Swedish cities frequently quoted. The committee was therefore probably more concerned with the survival of its neophyte mission than with modifying the specific administration of it in the field. There is no evidence that Witt and his two colleagues settled their differences before events related to the war made them even worse. Indeed, in mid-January 1879 Witt sent Flygare a letter in which he criticised him for remaining in Durban at the expense of the SKM, ostensibly without doing any work there.[7]

This was a misunderstanding on Witt's part, because Flygare's time was fully occupied with evangelism amongst blacks and ministry to the Scandinavian population in that town. Nevertheless, it is another indication of how strained relations had become between Witt and his colleagues at a time when factors beyond their control would have made harmony within the SKM all the more desirable.

Prelude to War

The details of the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War and the violent events which precipitated it have been told too often and too well to require lengthy treatment of them here.[8] Some awareness of the *casus belli* is necessary, however, for understanding the history of the Swedish mission during this period, especially Otto Witt's observations of and participation in the tensions which preceded the eruption of hostilities as well as in the war itself. We shall therefore examine briefly the state of affairs between Natal and Zululand during the quinquennium immediately preceding the war, paying particular attention to how the tension affected Scandinavian missionary work in the region.

One central root of the war lay in the succession to the Zulu throne in 1873. During the previous year King Mpande died, and his eldest son, Cetshwayo, who for several years had been the *de facto* ruler of the nation, emerged victorious in the ensuing struggle for political supremacy. This appears to have alarmed many of the missionaries

in Zululand. Schreuder, for example, who at that time was still in the Norwegian Missionary Society, wrote dejectedly that "our Zulu mission is now in reality dissolved, and as far as the practical arrangements are concerned it has already entered the first stage of its dissolution".[9]

Schreuder's fears seemed justified in 1873, because the irascible Cetshwayo declared that all missionaries in his realm were *personae non gratae* and demanded that they leave. The new monarch's decree was not executed, however, and most of the missionaries remained. On the occasion of Cetshwayo's coronation, Natal's Secretary for Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone (1817-1893), arranged a compromise on the issue of Christian missions in Zululand. He elicited from Cetshwayo a promise to allow those missionaries who were already in Zululand to stay there but that no additional ones would be admitted. At the same time, however, Cetshwayo decreed that the conversion of any of his subjects to Christianity without his permission would be regarded as a criminal act. The missionaries were thus superficially tolerated and allowed to proclaim the Gospel, but their presence in Zululand was at best tenuous for the next six years. It was in this situation that Witt found himself when Schreuder stationed him at Ntumeni in 1876.

During the mid-1870s relatively few people in Zululand defied Cetshwayo's decree and converted to Christianity, but by 1877 the number of conversions, though small, was apparently of sufficient magnitude to alarm either the Zulu monarch or some of his chiefs. Persecutions of converts broke out, causing a wave of protest in missionary circles. The extent of the oppression has been debated. To some of the missionaries in Zululand at the time, it seemed evident that wholesale persecution of their converts was either a present or imminent reality. They wrote lurid accounts of martyrdom at the hands of royal Zulu executioners. Some historians, however, especially Professor Norman Etherington, have challenged this traditional view and argued that only a few Christians were actually put to death. Cetshwayo, in their view, was a relatively innocent figure.[10]

Even before 1877, some of the missionaries in Zululand sought to persuade the British to intervene there on the grounds that Cetshwayo was violating the terms of the agreement he had made with Shepstone in 1873. Schreuder was in the forefront of this effort. In 1875 he dined in Pietermaritzburg with Sir Garnet Wolseley (1833-

1913), the new British governor of Natal, and sought unsuccessfully to extract from him a promise to prevent Cetshwayo's lieutenants from starting a full-scale armed conflict. The Norwegian also informed him that Cetshwayo had some 40 000 trained men at his disposal.[11] Wolseley visited Schreuder at Untunjambili a few weeks later. After the meeting the governor recorded in his diary that according to the Norwegian bishop "all men of influence in Zululand look forward to our taking possession of it some day, and even often ask him why we don't do it at once".[12]

When the violence in Zululand escalated in 1877 while Witt was working at Ntumeni, more missionaries became involved in the campaign to stimulate British intervention. The Norwegian Missionary Society became involved. At their annual field conference in July 1877, its missionaries in Southern Africa discussed the violence in Zululand and decided to dispatch superintendent Ommund Oftebro and Ole Stavem (1841-1932) to Pietermaritzburg to plead their case before Shepstone. He was absent from the city, though, so they had to speak instead to Bulwer, who suggested that the Norwegians remain in Zululand for the time being, thereby indicating that he did not envisage any intervention in the short term.[13] Bulwer did not tell these two envoys anything specific about British plans regarding Zululand. The Norwegians, keenly aware of the disturbances in Cetshwayo's domain, thus became even more impatient. "In Africa, as elsewhere, there has been something tortuously slow about it", wrote Stavem sarcastically about British resolve in the matter. "For the most part it consists of threats and bluster, transporting a few hundred soldiers, sailing some naval vessels from one harbour to another - all in all tin soldiers who are not intended to mean much and whom people laugh at".[14]

It should be emphasised that at no time did the SKM, which during the 1870s did not have a single station in Zululand and only one in Natal, become involved in these efforts to persuade the British to act against Cetshwayo. It would hardly have been appropriate for its steering committee in distant Stockholm and Uppsala to have done so. Yet against this background Witt's cautious remarks from Ntumeni in 1876 and 1877 (cited in the section titled *The Acquisition of Oscarsberg* in Chapter II of the present study) become more contextually comprehensible. Compared with what men like Schreuder and Stavem were saying and doing, the young Swedish newcomer to the field was quite reserved at that time.

While at Oscarsberg in 1878, however, Witt clearly became more outspoken in his opinions of relations between Zululand and Natal and about British policy towards Cetshwayo's kingdom. In March, only a few weeks after arriving at his new station, he witnessed the negotiations which the British conducted with Sirayo, one of Cetshwayo's most powerful chiefs, over the boundary dispute between Natal and Zululand. How well Witt understood the relatively complicated background of this controversy is not known; nothing in his correspondence indicates that his comprehension of it encompassed anything from the era when Mpande was the Zulu monarch or relations between Natal and the occupied Transvaal. The presence of between twenty and thirty tents which accommodated an undisclosed number of British soldiers at Rorke's Drift, however, led him to believe that "this means the certain eclipse of the Zulu people, and there should not be any doubt that within a short time Zululand will be an English colony". It was therefore not surprising to Witt to see missionaries from Zululand cross the Buffalo River in anticipation of imminent hostilities.[15]

In December 1878, when the British sent Cetshwayo an ultimatum demanding *inter alia* the extradition of certain alleged criminals, fines totalling 600 cattle, the disbanding of the Zulu army, the stationing of a British resident in Zululand, and the re-admittance of the missionaries into Zululand, Witt again expressed optimism in correspondence to the SKM that the British Empire was about to expand. He did not believe, however, that Cetshwayo would capitulate without a fight. Witt realised that the Zulu military forces, though inferior to the British, encompassed a large portion of the male population, and he guessed that in the short term they could be mobilised much more quickly than the British soldiers could mount an effective assault on Zululand. Nevertheless, the seemingly endless reserves which the British could muster made Witt believe that they could wear down their poorly equipped African adversaries. "With God's help Cetshwayo's power has been or soon will be broken", he concluded.[16] With this confident attitude Witt approached the completion of his first year of service at Oscarsberg shortly before the outbreak of the war.

The Faulty Historiography of the "Battle of Rorke's Drift"

The role which Witt played at his station on 22 January has never been adequately treated in the pertinent historiography. During the 1960s and 1970s several books were written about the Anglo-Zulu War in general or specific aspects of it. Most of the authors of these chiefly popular accounts either mentioned Witt and his station very briefly or ignored him entirely. None appears to have availed himself of relevant materials in Swedish, which the linguistic barrier may make excusable, and very few seem to have employed what Witt related in English during his stay in London in March 1879. Instead, when describing Witt most historians of the war have merely reproduced what they found in existing secondary literature. This accounts for the continuation of errors in the relevant historiography.

One partial exception to this is Donald R. Morris, whose weighty study *The Washing of the Spears* remained the standard history of the war for many years after its publication in 1965. Morris devoted several pages to the battle at Oscarsberg and intimately related events, apparently relying exclusively on British sources. Those tendentious materials, however, gave him a caricature of Witt, who consequently emerges as a peculiar figure in his book. Even before the battle, Morris claimed, Witt was an "odd missionary", although why that was supposedly the case is not stated. Morris also asserted that Witt was already unpopular in Natal, "where the colonists resented the wildly inaccurate stories he gave to the English newspapers". In fact Witt was virtually unknown in the colony until his first accounts of the battles at his station and Isandhlwana, together with a few deprecating statements about race relations in Natal, appeared in the British press in March 1879, some six weeks after the battle. As the British soldiers who had commandeered his station prepared for the Zulu assault, Witt supposedly "became frantic at the sight of the destruction of his furniture". This reaction was probably found in one of the contemporary accounts. Less easily explained is Morris' pretension that a historian could read Witt's mind. Referring to the Swede's concern about the safety of his wife and children, who had left Oscarsberg several days earlier, Morris declared that "in his excited imagination nothing stood between them and a bloodthirsty Zulu impi but the Buffalo River and a few miles of open country". Finally, Morris alleged, again

without betraying the source of his information, that immediately before Witt left Oscarsberg he relinquished his "claim to his homestead".[17]

As the centenary of the war approached, several other histories of it were published in South Africa and elsewhere. The accounts of Witt and his modest role were invariably derivative (relying heavily on Morris' influential book but rarely acknowledging it), condescending, and vague. Alan Lloyd, for example, devoted one sentence to the Swede, describing him obliquely as an "excitable man whose relationships were poor on both sides of the border. . .". On what he based this one-dimensional portrayal of Witt's personality Lloyd did not indicate.[18] David Clammer, in another general history also published in 1973, sought to provide more details about Witt and Oscarsberg but only confused matters. He declared that James Rorke had previously farmed at the place which bore his name and had erected there a house and a barn, "the latter having been turned into a chapel when a Swedish missionary named Otto Witt took the placed [sic] over in 1875". This chronology is incorrect; Witt arrived at the site only in 1878, some twelve months before the battle. Clammer's account of his conduct on 22 January, given without indication of source, does not make sense. He wrote: "Witt, the missionary, horrified at the destruction of his property, and hearing of the disaster that had befallen the Central Column [at Isandhlwana], decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and departed in the direction of Helpmekaar". This assertion leaves the reader wondering whether Witt left Oscarsberg before, during, or even after the battle there. Clammer revealed that he did not understand Witt's subsequent remarks by asserting that the Swede "set up as a lecturer in England, claiming to have been present not only at Rorke's Drift, but at Isandhlwana as well".[19]

In his more narrowly focused study of the battle at Oscarsberg, Michael Glover perpetuated the convention of quickly dismissing Witt. He ridiculed the Swede's account of the slaughter at Isandhlwana and generalised that "Witt was as unreliable as a witness as he was in every other way". Glover gave no indication, however, how he was in a position to make such a comprehensive indictment or what the content of Witt's other unreliability may have been. Glover appears to have relied on an unspecified and inaccurate account, for he declared that Witt had earlier sent his family to the safety of Pietermaritzburg and found them only after reaching Durban.

In fact he had sent them to the Gordon Memorial station, and they were reunited in northern Natal.[20]

Some of these historiographical *faux pas* can perhaps be traced to unreliable oral tradition amongst Witt's descendants. The untenability of such evidence, if that it generously may be called, is clear from an undated document written by P.S. Hervey and preserved at the Killie Campbell Africana Library of the University of Natal. A son of Witt's eldest child, Hervey presumably believed he could serve historical scholarship by committing to writing a sensational inherited account of how the Witts left Oscarsberg separately but were eventually reunited. Stating that he was conveying information which his mother had given him, he declared that Witt "had constructed the buildings so gallantly defended by the British forces", but upon receiving word that "the natives were massing for an attack on all Europeans" he sent his wife and children to Port Natal. "A day or two later" Witt himself left his station in pursuit of the wagon which he believed was carrying his family to the coast. *En route* he had to perform guard duty on the Zululand border. After completing this undesired task he continued further south in Natal searching for his wife and small children. At one point an elderly Zulu man told him to his horror that an *impi* had attacked a wagon matching the description which Witt gave him and killed the white people in it. Meanwhile, Mrs Witt had been travelling for several days and along the way had heard from a Zulu man that an unspecified European on horseback had fallen victim to another African war party. Quite unexpectedly the separately grief-stricken Witts subsequently found each other in the veld. Hervey related these "full facts" in detail, mercifully resisting the temptation to conclude his tale by remarking that his maternal grandparents lived happily ever after.[21]

Yet virtually none of this proves factual when assayed with the touchstone of contemporary accounts. To mention only the most obvious errors, Witt did not erect the buildings at Oscarsberg, and there is no evidence that anyone told him that the Zulu forces were massing to attack; he claimed at the time that he had monitored their movements from the highest hill at his station. He did not send his family to Port Natal, but only to Gordon Memorial a few kilometres away. There is no evidence, moreover, that Witt performed guard duty. Finally, Hervey appears to have relied on nothing save his imagination when *inter alia* describing how his grandfather,

riding a "gaunt looking horse", had "looked indifferently into the valley" after virtually abandoning the search for his wife and children. This flight of fantasy is unfortunately typical for much of Hervey's manuscript. In short, his version of this family tradition, if it has any value at all, lies in its exemplification of how unreliable and apparently embellished materials of this sort can be.

A Witness of the Anglo-Zulu War?

A careful examination of pertinent sources yields a more nuanced picture of Witt's role in the Anglo-Zulu War, one which differs significantly from that presented in any of the studies of that conflagration referred to above. Such an investigation also sheds light on how this Swedish missionary himself contributed to the misunderstandings of his part. Within a few weeks of the British invasion of Zululand in January 1879, Witt was heralded as a principal eye-witness of the battles at Isandhlwana, at which part of the British army was destroyed, and Rorke's Drift, which was actually fought at Oscarsberg, where approximately 100 Imperial soldiers successfully held off a Zulu force of at least thirty times its size. The young Swedish missionary was quoted uncritically in the British press, vilified in that of Natal, and seems to have enjoyed the considerable international attention which he received. However gratifying this acclaim may have been when Witt returned to Europe after nearly three years in Africa, however, it was almost entirely undeserved. In fact, he saw very little if any of the extermination of the British army at Isandhlwana, and it only from a great distance. Furthermore, by the time Zulu forces attacked his station he and his family had taken flight in search of safety from the hostilities. The news-hungry British journalists who uncritically accepted Witt's embellished account of the events of 22 January were unaware of these facts, however, and linguistic reasons have compelled most of the historians who have mentioned Witt in their treatments of the Anglo-Zulu War to draw on the London press as their chief and perhaps only source for him. To his colleagues in Natal, however, and to other bellicose white Natalians, Witt's narrative seemed fictitious and was resented from the outset. When assayed with the touchstone of the relevant archivalia, much of Witt's version of

those battles proves to be fool's gold rather than the nugget which it was initially believed to be.

The Anglo-Zulu War began on 11 January 1879, a day after the British ultimatum to Cetshwayo expired unfulfilled. A tri-partite army under the command of Lieutenant-General Frederic Augustus Thesiger, Lord Chelmsford (1827-1905), invaded Zululand. His right column crossed the Tugela River just inland from the Indian Ocean and met little resistance on its march to Eshowe, where, however, Zulu forces besieged it. The left column, meanwhile, advanced from Newcastle and Utrecht into the heart of Zululand, aiming to capture Cetshwayo's distant royal kraal at Ulundi. The centre column, largest of the three, crossed the Buffalo River at Rorke's Drift, also with the intention of marching to Ulundi. Before the invasion, the British appropriated Oscarsberg for use as an advance base hospital and stores depot. Witt's primitive manse accommodated the sick and wounded British soldiers brought to the station. The small chapel was used for storage.

On the morning of 22 January much of the central British force, consisting of approximately 950 white men and nearly that many Zulu volunteers, was camped at Isandhlwana, some twenty kilometres east of Rorke's Drift. The camp lay south-east, i.e. below, the Nqutu Plateau. During the morning a small number of Zulus were spotted on the escarpment of that plateau, although at first these sightings were apparently not taken seriously. Shortly before noon a British calvary unit noticed Zulus suspiciously herding cattle on the escarpment and pursued them. One rider who nearly caught up with the herders discovered to his horror that a massive number of Zulu warriors, reportedly more than 20 000, crouching in a ravine beyond the escarpment. This horseman, whom the massive horde spotted, began to ride back towards the camp, as did his comrades, but not before the Zulus stirred and began the initial phase of their attack.

The distance of the Zulu camp from that of the British below the escarpment gave the latter approximately twenty or thirty minutes to prepare for the assault. There was apparently considerable misunderstanding about the magnitude of the Zulu force and its intentions, however, including a false report that it was withdrawing. Consequently, the much smaller British unit did not take proper notice and either brace for a full-fledged attack or attempt to retreat. When the Zulu forces finally

charged down the escarpment in more than half a dozen columns, it gave the British an awesomely broad target but one which relentlessly refused to submit to much more advanced firepower. Compounding the fatal frustration, much of the British ammunition was secured in metal boxes, and there were not enough screwdrivers to open them in time for the battle. For a time the British nevertheless managed to hold off the attack, but when one Zulu column broke through to the main part of the camp the struggle was in effect lost. Zulu assegais, rifles, and other weapons proved deadly at short range. Nearly all the British soldiers and officers were killed, including most of those who sought to flee. The majority of their African mercenaries also fell. More than 2 000 of Zululand's soldiers also died at Isandhlwana, which for both sides was thus the bloodiest battle of the war.

Fifty-five Europeans and approximately one-third of the blacks who fought alongside them survived the battle, though some of these people later died of their wounds. The whites who succeeded in fleeing Isandhlwana found their way to the Scottish Gordon Memorial mission station at Msinga, the town of Helpmekaar, and Oscarsberg.[22]

As mentioned earlier, Witt's station was then serving as a field hospital for the British forces. He had been compelled to lease the modest buildings at Oscarsberg to the Crown for the first three months of 1879. The rent which the SKM was supposed to receive for this period totalled £27.0.0. In addition, it was to get £15.0.0 for the use of its punt and ferry at Rorke's Drift for the same period.[23] On the eve of the battle of Isandhlwana, thirty-six patients were occupying the stone and brick manse, only three of them actually wounded. The supplanted Witt had been relegated to a tent on the property. He had sent his wife and three small children to Gordon Memorial a few days earlier. During the fortnight immediately preceding the battle, more than 5 000 troops had passed through the area. Despite the strategic location of the station ten minutes' walk from Rorke's Drift, however, practically nothing had been done to fortify it. The location of the hospital so close to a point where the Buffalo River could easily be crossed made it all the more vulnerable.

One must wonder, though, whether the rented station and the battle fought at it would have been paid more than scant attention had it not been for the valour of the British who defended it. After all, Oscarsberg was not a central or even a

secondary military position, and it was not in Zululand. Why the Zulus expended so many lives there defies rational explanation. There is a consensus in the historiography of the war that Zulu forays into Natal were anomalies of which Cetshwayo did not approve. Moreover, despite the nominal success of the defence of the place, it was destroyed in the battle. From the viewpoint of missions history, however, the destruction of the station and Witt's behaviour in connection with it were highly consequential. It therefore seems necessary to review the battle briefly before turning to Witt's subsequent actions and his observations of the devastating events of 22 January.

Before turning to a brief consideration of the actual fighting, it should be emphasised that the Witts had taken pains to develop their new station. In some descriptions of the battle there, historians and other writers have mistakenly portrayed Oscarsberg as a very primitive place. Morris, for example, asserts without indicating his source that the manse was "a poor residence" and that "the Witts had made pathetic little efforts to brighten the drab structure. . .".[24] This hardly does justice to their attempts to create at that lonely outpost a home with many of the comforts which the Lutheran clergy then enjoyed in Sweden. The list of furniture, household items, and other personal possessions which Otto Witt submitted to the steering committee of the SKM in his efforts to receive compensation for his losses underscores the relative luxury of the lifestyle which he and his family were trying to have at Oscarsberg. Amongst the items which went up in flames were no fewer than thirty-six pairs of sheets, eight table-cloths, seventy-two serviettes, nine mattresses, eight large blankets, six wine glasses, and two sewing baskets. Mrs Witt may have felt compelled to project professional dignity at Oscarsberg. Her wardrobe had included, in addition to the items of clothing with which she escaped, at least twenty-three dresses, eighteen collars, thirty-six handkerchiefs, and sixty pairs of stockings. Otto Witt's wardrobe was much more modest, but it included *inter alia* eighteen pairs of stockings, twelve clerical collars, twenty-four handkerchiefs, and eighteen shirts.[25] The couple also owned large quantities of foodstuffs which fell victim to the war.

At midday small arms fire could be heard at Oscarsberg, although no-one knew precisely where it was coming from or the extent of the fighting from which it arose. Consequently, no action was taken as a result of it. After lunch one of the British

officers rode to Rorke's Drift to inspect improvements being made on the approaches to it. While he was there two mounted lieutenants coming from Zululand brought him the shocking news of the massive losses which had just been lost at Isandhlwana. They also stated that the surviving remnant of the British forces was on its way towards Rorke's Drift with a huge Zulu *impi* in hot pursuit.

While this was going on at the Buffalo River, Witt, a British military chaplain, a surgeon, and a soldier climbed the largest hill on the property in the hope of seeing the source of artillery fire which they had begun to hear in the distance. They could see the distant escarpment but little else. Witt and two of the other men remained atop that hill for some time, and eventually they noticed one large corps of Zulu soldiers approaching from the east. The three Europeans quickly descended to the station buildings, which the ca 100 soldiers at Oscarsberg were frantically attempting to fortify with biscuit boxes and mealie bags, and warned them that an attack could be expected soon. Witt then left the station and rode to Gordon Memorial in the hope of finding his wife and children. He observed very little if any of the actual fighting at Oscarsberg.

In the absence of Witt, the battle began at approximately 16h30 and lasted for about twelve hours. During the fighting, much of it hand-to-hand, the British expended more than 20 000 rounds of ammunition, firing at close range even after their rifles were almost too hot to hold. Almost twenty of them were killed in the process, as opposed to several hundred Zulus. No fewer than eleven Victoria Crosses were subsequently awarded for valour.[26]

Precisely what Witt did immediately after leaving Oscarsberg is difficult to ascertain. His own accounts place himself in a favourable light, but no other known sources corroborate this, and at least one observer drew a less flattering portrait of his conduct as he raced away from the theatre of war. After arriving in London some six weeks later, Witt explained to reporters why he had left Oscarsberg. "Though wishing to take part in the defence of my own house and at the same time in the defence of an important place for the whole colony, yet my thoughts went to my wife and to my children", he stated. "Having seen one part of the Zulus going in that direction [i.e. towards Gordon Memorial], I followed the desire of my heart, saddled my horse, and started to warn my family. After five days' journey, frightened by all sorts of

reports, . . . I reached Pietermaritzburg".[27] Missing from this account is any mention of how and where Witt found his family and an explanation of what he (or they) encountered between Oscarsberg and Pietermaritzburg.

In his memoirs, which were published in 1922, Witt provided a few additional details of his hurried departure from Oscarsberg. In the brief narrative which he then gave of the events surrounding the destruction of the station, he mentioned that a Swedish engineer, whom he unfortunately did not identify, was visiting him at Oscarsberg at the time and fled with him immediately before it was attacked. Moreover, in what may have been a poetic embellishment, Witt claimed that he and his fellow Swede rode away from the station only after the bullets began to fly around them. He also disclosed in his memoirs that he and his fellow Swede got lost during the night on their way to Gordon Memorial and that upon arriving there he learnt that his wife and children had just left in an ox wagon bound for Pietermaritzburg. Witt and the engineer remounted their horses and set out after them, eventually finding them the following day. In the meantime a Zulu who had claimed to have witnessed the destruction of Oscarsberg had told Mrs Witt that he had seen her husband fall there.[28]

By the time the Witts reached Pietermaritzburg, it was known there that Oscarsberg had been destroyed. The heavy losses which the British forces had incurred on 22 January presumably convinced Witt that the war would last longer than he had earlier anticipated and that he would not be able to return to his station indefinitely. On 28 January he therefore signed a statement giving power of attorney to Bernhard Kraft, a German immigrant from Hamburg who farmed near Oscarsberg. Kraft was thus authorised to represent the SKM to manage its affairs at that station in Witt's absence.[29] The authorisation was not explicitly limited to a certain period of time. It soon became evident that Kraft would have to represent the SKM much longer than anyone had probably anticipated.

Witt apparently considered remaining in Pietermaritzburg until the war had ended but did not feel much safer there than he had near the border of Zululand. "The fear was greater here than at any of the places we had passed through along the way", he wrote of the Natal capital a few weeks later.[30] After a few days in Pietermaritzburg Witt therefore took his family by omnibus to Durban, only to learn that

the town was full of white refugees from Zululand and several parts of Natal. The price of accommodation, of which Durban did not have a great deal for visitors, had consequently risen sharply. This placed the Witts into a dilemma. They had enough cash to hire a room for a few days, but Witt estimated that remaining in Durban indefinitely would cost £2 *per diem*, an amount which he simply could not afford. Rumours circulated that at least two months would pass before significant military reinforcements arrived from Britain and that in the shadow of the devastation at Isandhlwana little would be done militarily in Zululand before they came. Had relations amongst the Swedish missionaries been more harmonious, perhaps the Witts could have stayed temporarily with Flygare, who was then evangelising Africans and ministering to Scandinavians in Durban. Complicating matters further still for Witt was the fear of being conscripted into a colonial regiment and sent to fight in Zululand. As no viable alternative presented itself, Witt decided, perhaps too hastily, to leave Natal and return to Sweden. He and his family consequently boarded the *Warwick Castle* bound for England on 11 February. They landed at Plymouth on 4 March. The following day Witt wrote from London to inform the SKM steering committee about his whereabouts and explain why he had left the field.[31]

The members of the committee did not conceal their initial surprise at and dissatisfaction with Witt's unauthorised action. Meeting on 28 April, several weeks after he had returned to western Sweden, they ordered him to come to Stockholm and give a *viva voce* account of his actions. The committee also compiled a list of questions which he was requested to answer. These dealt principally with his reasons for leaving Natal but also with the future of Oscarsberg and the Southern African field in general.[32] Witt travelled to Stockholm and responded to them promptly and directly. He did so initially in written form on 2 May. His answers, some of them quite detailed, shed additional light on the plight of the SKM in Natal, relations between Witt and his colleagues, and the Anglo-Zulu War. Self-justification clearly underlay them, although much of Witt's account to his superiors appears to be sincere.

Going far beyond what he had written to the steering committee from London, Witt declared that before the outbreak of the war he was fairly well informed about Zulu plans for the defence of their country. They were determined from the outset,

he declared, to fight to the last man to preserve their national independence. The "unflinching courage" and "scorn for death" of the Zulus, combined with the topographical and geographical disadvantages which the British would confront, had convinced Witt even before hostilities erupted that the war would last for a long time. Witt further justified his departure from Natal by pointing to his belief that passage to Sweden would have been cheaper than hired accommodation in Durban or elsewhere in Natal or the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope. Raising expenses higher still, all had been lost at Oscarsberg, so it seemed more reasonable to return to Sweden and acquire more household furnishings there. Witt admitted that familial factors militated against a decision to leave Natal. His wife had a "natural fear of travel by sea", and he had been concerned that the journey would be difficult for his three children, the youngest of whom was only six weeks old when they left Durban. But Witt used even these facts to justify his action, arguing that it had seemed so necessary that he had been willing to put the welfare of the SKM ahead of that of his family.

Witt candidly advanced another reason for returning to Sweden. He conceded that relations between himself and his colleagues, especially Flygare, had been unsatisfactory and would have to change if the SKM was to have a viable mission in Natal. Witt asserted that he believed it was incumbent on himself to give the steering committee a "correct and complete" picture of these relations, although he did not seek to explain why that could not have been done in writing from Oscarsberg or elsewhere in Natal. In any case, Witt insisted that the root of the trouble lay in Flygare's financial indebtedness and his own unwillingness to use SKM funds to extricate Flygare from this predicament by purchasing his land in Natal, which Witt believed was not suitable for use as a station. Witt partially excused Fristedt for co-operating with Flygare's criticism of him, gratuitously claiming that the former was easily swayed and too readily came under Flygare's influence, and therefore had acted against his better judgement. As a final reason for justifying his decision to leave Natal, Witt pleaded that he had been under severe mental stress at the time. This was probably true, even if it also may have been an appeal for sympathy from the steering committee. He mentioned that his wife had been told, though incorrectly, that he had fallen at Oscarsberg, and that for five days and nights

on their way to Pietermaritzburg he and his wife had lived in constant fear of dying violently at the hands of the Zulus. Turning to the future of Oscarsberg and other possible stations, Witt argued that each of them should have an agriculturalist in addition to a missionary. He proposed retaining Bernhard Kraft, whom he had employed in 1878, in this capacity at Oscarsberg. Witt believed that the stations could thereby become self-supporting. He did not advance detailed plans for establishing such a system but encouraged the steering committee to correspond with its counterparts in the Scottish Free Church and the Hermannsburg Mission. Witt was adamant, though, in his insistence that the SKM not emulate the Hermannsburg Mission in expecting its missionaries also to serve as farmers. Instead, he again proposed raising missionary salaries so that ordained men would be freed from economic burdens. Apart from that, Witt's only concrete suggestion was that dairy farming be improved in the SKM's field. At Oscarsberg, he noted, the SKM had owned four cows and he two, but that herd had not produced enough milk to fill the needs of Witt's family and the employees at the station.

Witt defended his negotiations with the British regarding their use of Oscarsberg. He had first insisted that they pay £14 per month for use of the manse, a sum which Witt believed would suffice for the support of himself and his family elsewhere while the station was occupied. Chelmsford had countered with an offer of only £5 per month. When Witt had protested against this, the British general had threatened to occupy Oscarsberg without compensation. This bluff, if indeed that is what it was, succeeded. Witt had managed, however, to arrange with another officer to get £9 per month for the use of the other major building and £5 per month for use of the ferry. Before a contract could be written, though, Oscarsberg was destroyed.[33]

On 7 May the committee met again to consider his answers. The committee expressed its satisfaction with Witt's explanations and sought to make the best of what it realised was an extremely difficult situation in Southern Africa, where the war was still raging. Witt was authorised to travel around in Sweden, speaking about the work of the SKM in Natal and raising funds for the reconstruction of Oscarsberg. The committee agreed to continue to pay his salary during this unspecified period and underwrite his travel expenses. The committee also approved Witt's granting power of attorney to Bernhard Kraft in matters concerning Oscarsberg. It directed

Witt to begin to take steps towards seeking compensation for losses incurred at that station and approved in principle Flygare's purchasing of one at which he could work.[34]

That same day, presumably before the steering committee informed Witt of its general acceptance of his interpretation of events, he wrote again to the committee to petition for monetary support for deputation work in Sweden in mid-1879. He also requested permission to remain in the country long enough to acquire a supplementary university degree. Concerned about living conditions at Oscarsberg, Witt asked the committee to allow him to hire Kraft to undertake the reconstruction of the manse there so that it would be fit for inhabitation upon his return to that station. Finally, Witt proclaimed to the steering committee that "since Flygare cannot live in harmony with other people, he must be made harmless by being placed in a separate field" apart from other Swedish missionaries.[35]

At that stage, relations between Witt and the steering committee appear to have been reasonably good. In the meantime, however, indeed two months earlier while in England *en route* to Sweden, Witt had recklessly
made remarks which not only exacerbated his relationships with Flygare and Fristedt but also caused a storm of protest amongst the colonists and in the press in Natal. One can attribute part of the rhetorical turbulence to the fact that while the British public was hungry for news from their controversial colonial war against Zululand, relatively little first-hand material was forthcoming for several weeks following the invasion of that country.

When the *Warwick Castle* arrived from Durban and Cape Town at Plymouth late on 4 March, therefore, reporters from the London press greeted her enthusiastically. The ship carried only seventy-four passengers, so Witt did not long remain anonymous. It is not known whether he deliberately sought attention, but in any case he immediately received it before the ship continued to London. A correspondent from *The Daily Telegraph* succeeded in interviewing and filing the first story about him, which consisted essentially of a description of the Swede as "a short spare man, with a light beard and moustache", his detailed, written account of the battles of Isandhlwana and Oscarsberg, and a brief oral statement in which he sought to place some of his remarks into a more ingenuous context by indicating the limits of his

own perspective. All of this appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on 5 and 6 March. As Witt was subsequently accused, not entirely unfairly, of embellishing his account for public consumption, it seems only reasonable to consider first the oral remarks which he made to the reporter at Plymouth. "I was not near enough to the scene of action to gather any exact details of the fight", he admitted with regard to the carnage at Isandhlwana. "My position was on the other side of the river from where the fight was raging". Turning to the subsequent battle at his station, Witt became more dramatic but perhaps less candid in describing how, shortly after it had begun, "I dashed away on horseback as hard as I could go, chased by the Zulus who did their best to catch me but failed. . . . I could just discern that the Zulus were hurling the bodies of their comrades upon the bayonets of the English as they fought and endeavoured to defend themselves in the kraal, but that was all".

Witt's lengthy narrative of these two battles was published in partly naive but generally excellent and at times almost poetic English, indicating that they had undergone extensive editorial polishing. The degree to which editors in London enhanced it is impossible to determine. At any rate Witt is not known to have subsequently disavowed or challenged anything which was attributed to him at that time. In view of this, one must assume that everything, or nearly everything, that was published in his name had his *imprimatur*.

Witt's account of "The Disaster at Isandula", as that Zulu place-name was frequently misspelt in Britain, thus appeared initially in *The Daily Telegraph*, in which he was described as "the Swedish Missionary at Rorke's Drift who witnessed the disaster", and was subsequently reproduced in other British newspapers. He began by sketching the station and general topography of the area in broad strokes, adding how the British had used his buildings as a field hospital and a commissariat store. His description of these matters was factual, modest, and uncontroversial.

The same cannot be said of Witt's dramatic account of the battle of Isandhlwana, in which he clearly exaggerated his role as a witness. He declared that he had ascended the hill at Oscarsberg and from its summit had "an excellent view of what was going on at a distance of three miles as the crow flies". Presumably few if any readers of *The Daily Telegraph* or the other newspapers in question could have realised that the Isandhlwana battlefield lay much farther than that distance from Witt's vantage

point, from which he may well have seen some staging areas but hardly much of the actual fighting, at least not that which he described in terms so graphic that they actually may have diminished the cogency of his account in the eyes of critical readers. "Behold on the one side a thousand soldiers, reinforced by equal their number of black ones, leaving their camp to attack an enemy more than ten times their number", he urged readers. "Behold on the other side this mass of Zulus, who, close together, walk straight against the mouth of the cannons. Look how thousands after thousands are killed, and nevertheless the mass prevails without fear over the dead bodies of their comrades against the destroying weapon". Having thus exaggerated the number of combatants on both sides and grossly oversimplified the actual fighting, Witt proceeded to romanticise the valour and intentions of those involved at Oscarsberg. In his narrative, however, the change of battlefields is not explicit; It is difficult to understand how most readers without other knowledge of the two venues could have sorted out the strands of the two battles which he confusingly wove together. "Behold on the one side a few dozen white troops, the only remainder of that thousand; look, how they, after having shot away all their ammunition, keep close together, trying yet a while to fight for their lives with the bayonet", he declared in words which must have stirred the hearts of British readers. Yet Witt paid equal homage to the Zulus: "Behold on the other side the black ones, how they are fighting against the intruder and oppressor, fighting for liberty and independence, coming close to their bayonets, and making them harmless by taking the corpses of their brethren and throwing them on them".

Only later in his narrative did Witt point out explicitly that part of it applied to Oscarsberg. He admitted that he did not remain there long. "Though wishing to take part in the defence of my own house and at the same time in the defence of an important place for the whole colony", he asserted patriotically, "yet my thoughts went to my wife and to my children, who were at a short distance from there, and did not know anything of what was going on. . . ". Witt gave the impression, however, as he had done orally in Plymouth, that he had witnessed the first part of the battle at his station at close distance immediately before and after his departure from the scene. "Before I started I saw a Zulu alone at the barricade, kneeling and firing.

The whole force drew nearer; the battle grew heavier. Soon the hospital [i.e. the manse] was on fire".[36]

As an assumed and unique eye-witness to these two battles, Witt gained instant notoriety in London, where he and his family remained for nearly a fortnight before continuing to Sweden. Their stay was a busy one. Journalists approached him repeatedly; he accepted invitations to give public lectures; and Colonial Secretary Sir Michael Hicks-Beach (1837-1916) interviewed him at the Colonial Office as a supposed authority on Zulu affairs. It was in this conversation of some thirty minutes, which was widely reported in the British press and reproduced in newspapers in Southern Africa and Sweden, that Witt made remarks which severely antagonised many English-speaking Natalians. The most widely quoted of these was his response to Hicks-Beach's question about the feelings of the Zulus in Natal towards the whites there. Witt, occasionally prone to generalisation, replied, "Well, not over friendly. The colonists generally treat the kaffirs very badly - just as dogs. Therefore if they felt themselves able to drive the white settlers out of the colony they would do so at the first opportunity". The outspoken Swede also made several comments which white Natalians would have found much less antagonistic. He made it clear that he did not oppose British intervention against Cetshwayo. Witt declared that the Zulus "did not like Cetewayo at all" "because he was a tyrant of the worst kind, and no one was safe under his rule". Reflecting a widely held missionary belief, Witt expanded on this by commenting on Cetshwayo's persecution of subjects who went to mission stations; "those who did so were marked for death". He claimed that he personally knew two Zulus who had thus become martyrs for their Christian faith. Hicks-Beach, searching for a means of pacifying Zululand after it succumbed to British imperialism, asked Witt whether the defeated people there "would be likely to become rebellious against the whites, and, if so, what would be the best way of keeping them quiet?" The missionary's reported reply revealed his tacit acceptance of inevitable British hegemony: "I think they would be rebellious, but if their guns and ammunition were taken from them altogether they would have no chance of rising against the whites; that is, if at the same time all chance of their getting other guns and ammunition was also prevented. Then they must keep quiet".[37]

Witt was invited to give a lecture at the City Temple on 12 March. As reported in the London press, most of his remarks dealt with Zulu folkways, such as the practice of *lobolo* and courtesies connected with the use of snuff, and religious beliefs, especially that of the transmigration of the souls of the deceased into the bodies of snakes. He also broached the persecution of converts to Christianity in Zululand, however, and without seeking to exonerate Cetshwayo, was less severe towards him than were many other contemporary commentators, thus in effect tempering his reported remarks of a few days earlier. When asked whether he believed it had been the intention of the Zulu monarch from the outset to invade Natal, Witt answered negatively.[38] In another interview he may have betrayed an uncritical acceptance of then still current pseudoanthropological misunderstandings of Genesis 9. Asked about the folkways of the Zulus, he declared that they had "generally marked Jewish features, while their language is full of Hebrew idioms".[39]

Word of Witt's role as a witness to the battles at Isandhlwana and Oscarsberg reached Sweden before he did. Four days after it was published in *The Times* and several other British newspapers, readers of *Aftonbladet* (i.e. The Evening Paper), and *Dagens Nyheter* (i.e. News of the Day), two major dailies in Stockholm, had access to the text in Swedish translation.[40] A day later *Öresunds-Posten* (i.e. The Öresund Mail), a daily newspaper in Helsingborg which many of Witt's former parishioners probably read, carried a somewhat shorter article about Witt taken from the *Central News*, another newspaper in London.[41]

The most graphic depiction of these events was that which appeared in *Ny Illustrerad Tidning* (i.e. New Illustrated Newspaper), a periodical published in Stockholm. That weekly reproduced from the *Illustrated London News* a two-paged drawing of the battle at Oscarsberg. This illustration gave a highly distorted impression of the station, however, and the accompanying article was replete with errors.[42] Several other papers in Stockholm and other Swedish towns also gave Witt publicity in March and April 1879, though usually in small dosages. In most instances these snippets were uncontroversial, and Witt's depiction of events at Isandhlwana and Oscarsberg went unchallenged in Sweden until Flygare and Fristedt took up the rhetorical cudgels against it, a matter to which we shall turn shortly.

The Controversy over Witt's Testimony

Both Witt's accounts of the battles of Isandhlwana and Oscarsberg and his comments to Hicks Beach caused a furore in Britain as well as in Natal. Both editors and readers of several newspapers responded defensively, not only by attempting to refute the Swede's statements through various rhetorical devices but also by seeking to discredit him through *ad hominem* attacks. The verbal assault on Witt embittered many colonists against him and, to a lesser extent, the SKM and missions in general. It also had serious ramifications within the ranks of the SKM, further deepening the cleft which separated Witt from Flygare and Fristedt.

The first reactions against Witt occurred in the British press and were by readers who were suspicious of his accounts of the battles in question and took issue with some of his comments about race relations in Natal. Some of the most hostile reactions were reprinted in newspapers in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. One anonymous writer in Hampstead identified only by the initials "E.W.M." contradicted Witt's assertion that colonists treated the indigenes like dogs. During his own stint in Natal, he declared, he had found much charitable treatment of them, and he regarded undeniable instances of abuse as exceptions. This reader asserted that "the Zulus much prefer a strict and just master to one who treats them with too much familiarity. . .". He reasoned that if the Zulus feared the British, many of them would not have crossed the Tugela River into Natal as refugees from the carnage in Zululand. That they had done so in order to escape British military violence did not seem to have occurred to him. Revealing a common prejudice, this reader thought it would be more appropriate for missionaries to adhere to strictly religious matters than to become involved in political issues.[43] Ignorance of the details of Witt's career as a missionary apparently confused some readers. One anonymous Englishman thought Witt had been disingenuous in his remarks about obeying Cetshwayo's laws in not sheltering fugitives from justice. "May I ask him through your columns how he, being in British territory and under British protection, was allowed to stay there by the goodwill of the Zulu King, and that he ought to obey his laws, although not in his country?" he wrote to the editor of *The Standard*.[44] Presumably this reader did not realise

that in 1876 and 1877 Witt had served at Schreuder's station, Ntumeni, in Cetshwayo's domain.

Many other critical responses to Witt's remarks appeared in the newspapers of Natal. One printed in *The Natal Mercury* was extended satirical doggerel containing an attempt at humour. It can be quoted *in extenso* both to indicate the seriousness with which some colonists took Witt's comments in London and the bitterness of their reactions:

"Witt Again"

I am a noble missionary,
Who Zululand did fly,
On that day when, a thousand men,
Stood still to fight and die.
I heard the battle ten miles off -
And then I came away;
For he who lives to tell a tale
Might fight another day.
My shanties at Rorke's Drift I left,
My interesting school;
"No thought of honour, duty," I -
I wasn't such a fool.
I saw my chance - my mission -
In London, in the Strand;
'Twas in the Hall of Exeter,
There would I take my stand.

I posted hard to Durban town,
And booked by Currie line;
So eagerly I longed to reach
The sphere in which I'd shine.

And ere the shores of Albion -
Soft Albion - I trod,
I found myself a hero,
A mendacious demigod.

Reporters wrote my chatter down,
And my ingenuous tale;
(*Ingenuous* I've heard it called
By cynics - but that's stale.)
I spouted and romanced to them
In office, church, and hall;
And even a State minister
I favoured with a call.
I told them how Sir Bartle Frere
(It wasn't true I know)
Had waged a vile and wicked war
Upon poor Cetywayo.
A good and pious monarch
Who shows no double face,
Whose attitude towards Natal,
Was no long drawn menace.

What care I for nobility,
I shan't get rich, I ween,
By praising men who try to serve
Their country and their Queen.
So "down with brave Sir Bartle Frere"
My battle cry, I guess,
I want fat compensation and
Praise from the A.P.S.

I said the Zulu nation,
Of noble warriors dark
Kept up their dangerous army,
Just simply for a lark.
And as they oft have threatened
To drive us from the land -
We should have waited till they did,
Before we made a stand.

That Cetywayo was a despot,
I quite forgot to say,
Who gloried but in blood and crime,
That terror marked his sway;
That the discord and the ferment
Which South Africa has known
So many years, have all been caused
By seeds which he has sown.

I said the "English in Natal
Their natives treat like dogs",
The B.P. even swallowed *that*
In the old land of fogs.
I did not add by "dogs" I meant
A lady's favourite pug,
Which nestles in her lap all day,
Or on her carriage rug.

I said these "dogs" desired to drive
The English to the sea,
All except, of course, the Bishop,
The ministers, and me.

I told them all the funny things
Those people *like* to hear,
And as they *list* to nothing else
The truth I need not fear.

So thanks to Providence, the day
The 24th were slain
Was blessed exceedingly by me,
And proved great source of gain.
Now I trust the next disaster
I may make another "hit",
And again malign the colony
To air my little *wit*.[45]

Reactions in prose were equally severe in Natal, especially in *The Natal Mercury*. "Mr. Witt, the Swedish Missionary, deserves to be canonised by the hierarchy of Exeter Hall", wrote one editor bitterly. "He turned up just in the nick of time to be of priceless service to the gathering forces of negrophilism". Impugning Witt's sincerity, he surmised that while Oscarsberg burnt Witt calculated that "his misfortune might be his opportunity. He would speed straight to Europe while the sad tidings of what was happening around him was still thrilling in the public ear. He would take with him a young Zulu boy, to point his moral and illustrate his tale". The editor speculated that the Swede had prepared his "artless narrative" of the events at Isandhlwana and Oscarsberg on board the *Warwick Castle* and had received "a handsome honorarium" for remarks which would "please the public taste for the time being". What irked this journalist more than anything else which Witt had said or written in England was his generalisation that "the colonists generally treat the kafirs very badly, just as dogs. . .". The editor called this allegation "a gratuitous calumny and a deliberate untruth" and asserted that no less than Witt's narrative of the battles it was a tendentious and insincere statement. Witt's speech at the City

Temple was also chastised in the *Mercury*. His remark that "the Zulu King did not at all intend to invade Natal" seemed absurd on the surface to Natalians who were aware of the destruction of Oscarsberg but who were unaware that Cetshwayo had not ordered that attack.[46]

Through investigative journalism editors at the *Mercury* sought to undermine Witt's credibility with regard to his damaging remarks about race relations in Natal. They presented his comments about treating the Zulus like dogs as highly ironic because of what they had uncovered about his own behaviour towards them. "We enter upon the task of exposure with satisfaction, as it will suffice to prove the utter worthlessness of the statements he made and calumnies uttered by this person", they wrote gleefully. Readers of the *Mercury* were then given an excerpt from the proceedings of the Resident Magistrate's Court at Msinga pertaining to the case of "Regina *v.* Rev. Otto Witt, Swedish Mission". In this case, heard before the Resident Magistrate Henry Francis Fynn the Younger (1846-1915) on 7 November 1878, the Swede had pleaded guilty to a charge that on a farm called Tyiana (the Zulu name for Oscarsberg) he did "on or about the 20th day of September 1878, wrongfully point or aim a loaded gun, and otherwise assault or strike one Nomrola, a native woman, the wife of one Kamgana, resident of the aforesaid farm". The incident allegedly was an attempt to compel the woman, who was not one of the Witts' employees, to wash some clothes for the family. Witt was sentenced to pay a fine of £5 or serve one month in prison with hard labour. He chose the former punishment.[47]

What may have hurt Witt's reputation and feelings just as much as this embarrassing revelation was the criticism to which other missionaries subjected him publicly. One of the first to do so was Posselt, the seasoned superintendent of the Berlin Mission in Natal. Writing in *The Natal Mercury*, he stated that during his more than three decades in Natal he had stayed with immigrants from England, Scotland, Germany, and the Netherlands, and in all instances "I saw the kafir well treated and happy". Adding a condescending racist tone to his generalisation, he sought to debunk Witt's comment about colonial treatment of the indigenes as "dogs" by in effect admitting that he perceived them as animals: "I found them everywhere as fat as pigs, frisking about as calves, singing and dancing - men, women, and children". Multiplying

generalisations, Posselt asserted that "the white colonist and the black native pull pretty well together . . . in spite of the great distance between the two races, where the one has reached the top of the long scale of civilisation, and the other still stands at the bottom, in the mud". This German racist then reversed his rhetoric and admitted that in fact ill treatment of the Zulus did occur but sought to excuse it in terms which made a mockery of Christian ethics. "We must also bear in mind that there are natives so insolent, so provoking, so sulky, so shockingly lazy, dirty, and brutish, that they deserve no better treatment than that of a dog. . .".[48]

The nadir of verbal assault on Witt's reputation was reached in April when his colleague Carl Ludvig Flygare, then serving as the unofficial pastor of the Scandinavian congregation in Durban, castigated him in a long letter published in *The Natal Mercury*. He began his attack by praising that newspaper for exposing Witt's alleged misconduct in London and repudiating "indignantly all participation or concurrence in any of Mr. Witt's sayings or actions". Flygare then disavowed Witt's statement about colonial mistreatment of the blacks as "dogs" and declared that his colleague's willingness to make such an indictment "shows that he has altogether deafened his conscience, so as to serve his ends". Firing another shot at Witt's supposed moral turpitude, he claimed that he and Fristedt had been compelled to protest to the leadership of the SKM when their colleague had allegedly abused his position as treasurer of the Natal field. Precisely what financial misdemeanours Witt had committed Flygare did not specify. He noted, however, that thousands of pounds sterling passed through Witt's hands annually but that Witt had been unwilling to give him and Fristedt an accounting of its use. Flygare was more specific in challenging Witt's honesty. He declared that Witt had stated "a great untruth" in claiming that the SKM was "exceedingly poor" and that he and his wife had therefore nearly starved to death at Oscarsberg. Flygare belittled Witt by relating how he had once visited him at that station and indeed found him and his wife hungry, an incredible state because "there were abundant provisions in garden and orchard, and a courtyard alive with fowls". When he had asked Witt how he could be hungry when surrounded by food, the latter had answered, "How can I catch the fowls, they run away when we want to kill them?" In a final exposé, Flygare revealed that when Witt had begun his ministerial career in Sweden he had "estranged his congregation from him, and was

very much vexed because his church was emptied by the able preaching of a faithful lay preacher of the same town who preached Christ the crucified and Him only, and had a larger audience than he, Mr. Witt. . . . Then he chose the mission field, where he also made unpleasant experiences. . .".[49]

Flygare, who may have felt unfairly exposed to public condemnation merely for being associated with Witt as a fellow Swedish missionary, also sent a vitriolic critique of his colleague's behaviour to the SKM steering committee. He declared that the remarks which Witt had made in London were "false testimony" and "dishonest assertions" which were doing the SKM inestimable damage in Natal because they gave the English-speaking public the false impression that Swedish missionaries in general were disloyal and unconcerned about public safety. Flygare attributed the statements in part to vindictiveness after Sir Bartle Frere had refused to meet Witt when the latter spent a few days in Pietermaritzburg *en route* to Durban. Flygare was especially angry because he believed Witt's comments about race relations in Natal strengthened the "false politics" which people like Bishop Colenso, sympathetic to the Zulus, were pressing during the war. He believed that Witt's actions proved that he "did not have the interests of the mission, but rather his own interests in mind". Flygare bolstered his case by sending to the steering committee several cuttings from *The Natal Mercury* which demonstrated that editorial opinion against Witt was extremely negative. Among these cuttings was one concerning Witt's conviction for threatening a Zulu woman with his rifle.[50]

Flygare also wrote directly to Witt a few weeks later. His letter was a curious combination of contrition and verbal assault. Flygare apologised for airing their differences in the *Mercury* and declared that it would have been better to have allowed the enmity between them to be resolved in the blood of Christ before Witt left Natal. He insisted that he had taken a step in that direction during Witt's brief stay in Durban by informing him in writing of the false statements Witt had made in a letter to him and Fristedt. "I hoped that this would bring you to your senses", Flygare wrote provocatively. He also chastised Witt for not turning over to him responsibility for the financial affairs of the SKM before sailing to England, but instead giving it to George Cato (1814-1893), the Swedish-Norwegian vice-consul in Durban.

Turning to Witt's conduct in London, Flygare did not mince words in lambasting what he called his colleague's "fictitious [*romanhaftiga*] account of what you experienced during your flight from Oscarsberg". He challenged him particularly on two points. First, Flygare declared emphatically that "the fact of the matter is that the battlefield at Isandhlwana . . . cannot be seen from the highest peak of the hill at Oscarsberg, as it lies at least seven English miles away". Secondly, Flygare was certain that Witt had sensationalised his narrative of his five-day journey from Oscarsberg to Pietermaritzburg by exaggerating the danger of being exposed to a Zulu attack. Flygare asserted without adducing a shred of evidence that "not a single Zulu pursued you a single step on the road" and suggested that "what was really pursuing you was not the Zulus but rather *the fear of the Zulus*. . .". Flygare thought this was particularly ironic because Witt had commented disparagingly about the lack of courage on the part of German missionaries who had left Zululand in 1877.[51]

Flygare also appears to have convinced Cato to turn against Witt after the latter's remarks in London became known in Natal. The vice-consul wrote to Archbishop Sundberg on 18 April 1879 to confirm that Witt had indeed asked him to seek compensation for losses incurred at Oscarsberg. He feared, however, that public opinion militated against the SKM's case. Cato placed the blame for this squarely on Witt's shoulders, declaring that his "conduct has been so very extraordinary, that it would not be advisable for him to return to this Colony, or for me to make any move in the matter".[52]

Flygare and Fristedt had sought to wrest control over the SKM's finances in Natal away from the people to whom Witt had entrusted them even before they learnt of his remarks in London. On 26 March the two Swedes wrote to the bank in Durban which their departed colleague had used and insisted that they be given "a list of all cheques which Mr O. Witt has drawn on you from the beginning of our Mission till now, viz. *date* and *amount* of each cheque, also in whose favour they are given".[53] This effort proved unsuccessful. An officer of the bank replied that the account which Witt had used for the SKM was a private one in his own name, and that therefore no information about it could be disclosed without his permission.[54] After another round of correspondence Flygare and Fristedt gave up their efforts to gain control of their mission's finances through that means.

Failing to do so, Flygare had pleaded wartime poverty to the steering committee. In May he had reported on his activities since moving to Durban and mentioned that he was paying £4 per month to rent a house in Berea. Flygare explained that his ministry to sea-farers would be easier if he were living in the centre of Durban, but that was financially impossible, because a house would have been at least £8 per month. He insisted, probably sincerely, that since becoming affiliated with the SKM he had lived modestly and indeed uncomfortably, bearing without complaint the heat of day and the cold of night. Having made these points, Flygare asked the steering committee to raise his salary to £200 and to release funds so that he could cover his current expenses.[55] No such raise, however, was forthcoming.

Apparently frustrated at what he probably perceived as a lack of concern and sympathy on the part of the steering committee, Flygare wrote again in August. He emphasised that he was still toiling but believed that "the Lord has blessed my activity here in Durban". Flygare was still preaching to Scandinavian sea-farers in the harbour, ministering to other northern Europeans in the city, and teaching Zulu men in a rented room every evening. He informed the committee, however, that his health had begun to decline and suggested that it would be better for him to purchase a station at a higher altitude somewhere between Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Such a situation would still allow him to spend part of his time in urban ministry.[56] There is no record of the committee replying to Flygare at that time.

When informed that the SKM steering committee had received a critical letter from Cato and learnt about the controversy surrounding his remarks in London and, belatedly, his court case in Natal, Witt was compelled to defend himself and explain his behaviour. He did this by writing a long letter to Sundberg in June 1879 and defended himself against most of the explicit and implied complaints about him. Witt challenged Cato's assertion that his behaviour had been "very extraordinary" by pointing out that the vice-consul had not adduced any evidence to substantiate or even explain this claim. Witt categorically denied having shot a Zulu woman (a rumour which no doubt had its germ in the publication in *The Natal Mercury* of a sketch of his conviction for threatening one with a rifle), explaining that the only shot he had fired was at a wild dog against whom he had had no other means of defending himself. He also defended his statement that the colonists in Natal

treated the Zulus there "like dogs" by referring to his experiences in Greytown in 1877. Witt mentioned again, as he had done at that time, that that town had three churches for Europeans but none for the blacks, and that when he had offered to open a school for the latter none of the whites wanted their servants to be educated. His efforts to preach to Zulus in Greytown had also met with opposition. "Many such incidents formed the basis of my statement that the blacks are treated like dogs", he wrote.

At the same time Witt emphasised to Sundberg that he was aware of the "unprecedented bitterness" which his remarks had aroused against him in Natal. This hostility, coupled with his beliefs that Oscarsberg would not again be suitable for inhabitation for several years and that there were thousands of unburied corpses near the station convinced Witt that he should remain in Sweden indefinitely.[57]

When faced with incompatible recriminations between Witt and Flygare, the steering committee sought to extricate itself from this dilemma by accepting the former's account of events and explanation of his conduct as essentially correct. Flygare did not escape with impunity after attacking Witt publicly and in correspondence to other people in the SKM. Carl Tornérhielm of the committee informed Flygare in July 1879 that he and his colleagues were dissatisfied with his letters to them. Tornérhielm also warned him not to discuss in the press controversies affecting the SKM and insisted that as far as financial matters were concerned Witt was responsible only to the steering committee.[58]

The committee also tried to deal decisively with several related matters, although being so far from the field militated against timely action. Not until September did it consider Cato's letter concerning Witt. The members expressed satisfaction with the latter's explanation of his conduct. The committee did, however, insist that Witt do whatever was necessary to get compensation for losses incurred at Oscarsberg.[59]

Witt's Activities in Sweden, 1879-1880

Witt's desire to remain in Sweden indefinitely was only partly fulfilled. Precisely how long he wished to stay there is not known, but for a while he may have abandoned

hope of returning to Natal at all. In his letter to Sundberg in which he defended himself against the charges which Flygare and Cato had levelled at him, Witt put forth two suggestions which indicated that he had at least two radically different visions of his own future. On the one hand, he proposed that he remain in Sweden long enough to study medicine, competence in which he believed would make him a more effective missionary. On the other hand, however, Witt suggested that the SKM should have a full-time director as opposed to being governed exclusively by a voluntary steering committee and volunteered to serve in that capacity if the committee so desired. He also suggested that he could teach Zulu to prospective missionaries and translate Swedish materials into that language.[60] In the end he did none of these things but continued to do deputation work in several parts of the country seeking to stimulate interest in and raise funds for the work of the SKM.

This task, coupled with lectures which appear to have been for his own monetary gain, began shortly after Witt sailed from England to Sweden and landed in Helsingborg on 18 March. The crowd which greeted him and his family at the quay foreshadowed the interest which many other Swedes would express in Witt during the next few months.[61] Three days later it was announced in the local press that the Commercial Club of Helsingborg had arranged to include him in a series of lectures which it sponsored.[62] That Sunday Witt preached to his former congregation in the city. The sanctuary of the church was so tightly packed with people eager to hear him that many people found it impossible to enter the building.[63] The following week Witt delivered his first public lecture of a three-part series in the lounge of the Mollberg Hotel. Subscribers to the entire series obtained tickets for two Swedish crowns, then the equivalent of slightly more than two shillings. Individual tickets were available for one shilling at the door and in the local book shops. Witt's topic was "Three Years of a Missionary's Life", although precisely what he spoke about under this rubric is not known.[64] He delivered the second lecture on 31 March and the third on 15 April.[65]

The next several months were busy for Witt. By the second week of September he had spoken a total of seventy-eight times in sixty-one different churches, chiefly in western and southern Sweden. Apparently the Witts again lived beyond their means during this period. In September Witt asked the SKM to assist him in

overcoming financial difficulties, pleading that in anticipation of his return to Natal he needed more money with which to purchase an unspecified amount furniture, clothing, books, and other items. He therefore suggested that his salary be increased to £200 *per annum*. Witt also thought it would be advantageous to receive training in carpentry before leaving Sweden.[66]

The steering committee acted promptly on some of his requests. Witt received additional funds to defray his deputation expenses, and the committee approved funding for basic training in surgery and obstetrics. Again, however, a raise in salary was denied, though the committee agreed to reconsider that matter at an unspecified later date. Finally, Witt was allowed to remain in Sweden until the beginning of 1880.[67]

Witt may have been the first Scandinavian missionary who sought to stimulate his compatriots' interest in his work by bringing an African back to Europe. When he and his family returned to Sweden early in 1879, they brought along a Zulu boy named Umkwelantaba. This youth had been born in Zululand around 1862 and was supposedly related to the Zulu royal family. He had come into contact with Christianity in 1878 by going to school at the Hermannsburg station at Ekuhlengeni, where Hans Heinrich Schroeder served. Umkwelantaba's relatives were alarmed when he expressed interest in becoming a Christian, however, and ordered him to leave the school. When he refused, Zulu soldiers entered the station with the intention of forcibly removing him. Umkwelantaba escaped by hiding in the chimney of the manse until they left.[68] Schroeder then sent him across the border into Natal, where the British authorities arranged for him to stay at Oscarsberg for a period of three years. Witt was initially sceptical of Umkwelantaba's interest in Christianity. "I do not believe that it was his intention from the outset to convert to Christianity", he wrote a year later; "at least his conduct did not indicate that". Within a short time, though, the boy had convinced Witt of his sincerity and his keen desire to learn. Witt explained that when the evacuation of Oscarsberg became necessary, he was legally responsible for Umkwelantaba and therefore had no choice but to take him along to a safer part of Natal. This is all plausible. Why he then brought him to Sweden, however, is less easy to understand without reference to the value of the boy in stimulating public interest. In a letter to *Missions-Tidning*, Witt cited Umkwelantaba's continuing

eagerness to attend school and to become a Christian, although both of those goals could have been achieved in Natal. One can hardly rule out the possibility that Witt was consciously exploiting the situation, although not necessarily for personal gain. In fairness to the Swede, however, it must be admitted that nothing in the extant evidence conclusively demonstrates what his aims really were. In any case, he had Umkwelantaba appear with him in several churches. On 7 December 1879 Witt baptised his Zulu ward at Sancta Maria Church in Helsingborg, giving him the name "Josef".[69] Witt stated that the young convert was "not an unusually gifted youth" but also insisted that he was "not below average, either".[70] By then a carpenter in Helsingborg, where Josef was living with the Witts, had accepted him as an informal apprentice, probably at the behest of Witt, who seems to have envisaged him eventually serving the SKM in a practical capacity in Natal or Zululand. In January 1880 Witt admitted to the steering committee that while Josef was going to the carpenter every day, he seemed to be doing so "only for my sake, and despite all my efforts to convince him that it is good for him to acquire a useful occupation". Josef frequently reminded Witt that he had promised to educate him personally if he came with him to Sweden. Witt sought to keep this promise, but his deputation work for the SKM prevented him from doing so on anything approaching a full-time basis. Josef therefore asked his harried teacher to request the steering committee to place him into a public school. Witt countered by suggesting that Josef be sent to the Johannelund Mission Institute, which the Evangelical Fatherland Association had administered in Stockholm since the early 1860s. He believed that Josef's ability to speak Swedish was rapidly becoming adequate for such study, and he proposed that a three or four-year course would suffice to prepare him for service in the SKM. "It is the goal of all missions to educate native catechists, who with their comprehensive understanding of the fine points of their language and knowledge of the customs of the people are of inestimable value", Witt declared. He admitted that he himself knew "relatively little" of the Zulu language, a statement which should perhaps be interpreted with the emphasis on the adverb, and expressed his belief that if theologically educated Josef would be able to work together with him in translating Christian materials, especially in the field of religious instruction, from Swedish into it.[71] The committee reluctantly agreed to this, and later in 1880 Josef enrolled at Johannelund.[72] After several years

of study there Josef returned to the mission field and served the SKM for several decades as a catechist and, eventually, a pastor.

The Debate over Witt's Return to the Mission Field

While Witt was travelling around Sweden speaking about the SKM's endeavours in Natal, a minor but revealing debate was taking place about the advisability of his returning to the mission field. To the steering committee, it seemed a foregone conclusion that he would do so. Members of the committee had read and apparently accepted his explanation for leaving Natal, and they were probably satisfied with his deputation work in 1879. Flygare, meanwhile, had vigorously opposed Witt's return, but the stridency with which he made his case from Durban may have proven counterproductive. In any case, the debate soon spread beyond the SKM and involved German, Norwegian, and British missionaries who held strong beliefs about the propriety of Witt resuming his work in the field. A sampling of their opinions will shed light on attitudes towards Witt and, to a lesser extent, Flygare.

One of the first people outside the SKM to become involved in the verbal fracas was Dalzell of Gordon Memorial, who had known Witt relatively well. In June 1879 Fristedt solicited his opinion about the suitability of rebuilding Oscarsberg, his colleague's possible return there, and how the Zulus in the area had reacted to Witt. Dalzell replied hesitatingly because of the sensitivity of the situation but nevertheless made clear his conviction that "Oscarberg [sic] or Rorke's Drift is not a suitable place for a mission station" and insisted that he had warned Witt of this in 1878. Unfortunately, the Scotsman did not inform Fristedt what was so unfavourable about the site. He was less cryptic, however, in explaining why Witt should not return to Natal, an opinion he had recently stated in a letter to the departed missionary. "The position he has placed himself in makes it impossible to send him back with any prospect of successful labour", Dalzell believed. Witt's comments in London about race relations in Natal underlay this opinion. Dalzell generalised that "the natives are shocked", though how they had learnt of the Swede's condemning remarks he did not say, and he feared for Witt's safety if he chose to return. "I would not

be surprised if some colonists 'of the baser sort' should treat him 'as a dog' after what he has said about them. All respect for him is gone".[73] Fristedt forwarded Dalzell's damaging letter to the steering committee, undoubtedly hoping that it would convince that body not to recommission Witt for service in Natal.

On the other hand, however strained his relations with his colleagues in the field had become during the late 1870s, Witt had both Norwegian and German allies in Natal who supported his case and encouraged him to return. Karl Hohls of the Hermannsburg Mission, who had worked with Flygare for several years during the 1860s and 1870s, wrote to Witt in August 1878 and urged him to return as soon as possible and take possession of Oscarsberg. It served no purpose to expend time and energy on disputes with Swedish colleagues, he believed. "Der arme Flygare ist ein Hetzkopf und extravaganter Mensch und läßt sich darum leicht blindlings zu Ungesichtigheiten hinreißen", Hohls explained. A spirit of forgiveness would be more productive: "Vergeben Sie ihm seine tolle und unverantwortliche Schreiberei gegen Sie, und bitten Sie die Direktion ihn nicht zu entlassen. Er, der Flygare hat doch bei alledem ein warmes Herz für die Mission. . .".[74]

Witt's most vocal and active defender in this debate may have been Ommund Oftebro, the field superintendent of the Norwegian Missionary Society. This seasoned missionary spent most of the war in Natal at Zinkwazi near the mouth of the Tugela River. On a trip to Durban, however, he spoke with Cato, who asserted that Witt and his colleagues in the SKM were "missionaries of the lowest class". Oftebro retorted that Witt was "of the very superior class", well-educated, serious, able, and energetic. In a letter to Witt, the Norwegian expressed his disagreement with the categorical mood of Witt's comments in London, which he labelled "careless", but did not question his sincerity in reporting on the battles at Isandhlwana and Oscarsberg. Oftebro did not regard Witt's conviction for assault as fair but believed that perjury may have been involved. "We all know that these heathens are not afraid of giving false testimony with their hands on the Bible", he declared. The Norwegian was particularly irked at Flygare's behaviour in this regard, claiming that he had given to the editor of *The Natal Mercury* an excerpt from the protocols of the magistrate's court at Msinga. On what Oftebro based this unsubstantiated assertion, however, is unknown. At any rate, he reacted very strongly when Flygare wrote to the *Mercury*

a letter sharply criticising Witt. Oftebro confronted Flygare shortly thereafter and accused him of being either insane or of questionable Christian character. The Norwegian superintendent urged Witt to return to Natal as soon as possible and participate in the rebuilding of the stations which had been destroyed in the war. There was little sense in remaining in Sweden to study medicine, he believed. Oftebro did, however, suggest that Witt could ease his return to Natal by writing a letter to the *Mercury* apologising for his remarks in London, especially with regard to the colonists' treatment of the Zulus there as dogs.[75]

The acrimony between Witt and Flygare, though, remained at the centre of the dispute. When Witt learnt that his colleague in Durban had written critically of him in the *Mercury*, he complained bitterly to the steering committee. Matching Flygare's vitriol stride for stride, Witt asserted that "it is a riddle to everyone who knows him, especially the missionaries, that he has thus far been allowed to remain in the service of the mission". Witt demanded that the committee order Flygare retract in the *Mercury* all the accusations he had made against him in that newspaper. Witt insisted that he would resign from the SKM if that were not done.[76] The committee did not take that drastic step, but Witt did not leave, either. Instead, after the committee received another acidulous letter from Flygare in September, Sundberg and Tornérhielm sent him a sharply worded reply and upbraided him for his public verbal assaults on his younger colleague. Underscoring their distance from the row, neither of these two SKM officials understood Southern African geography; they thought Flygare was in the Cape Colony.[77]

Before the end of 1879 Flygare sent the steering committee a partial apology for his conduct, though not before that body had demanded one. If his compliance was sincere, then he was deeply contrite. Flygare declared in his "humble answer" that it was his wish and prayer to transform his poor relationship with the committee into a positive one. He explicitly requested forgiveness and apologised for what he had written against Witt in the *Mercury*, stating that he hoped the dispute could be buried forever. Flygare emphasised to the committee, however, that it would be best for him and Witt to work independently of each other in the mission field.[78] This willingness on the part of Witt's principal Swedish adversary in Natal may have been significant in convincing him to return to the field. As will be seen in

the following section, as late as January 1880 Witt, whose feelings about the matter seem to have changed several times, expressed great doubt about the desirability of going back to Natal.

Preparing to Return to Natal

The encouragement which counterparts in other missions gave Witt and the support and prompting of the SKM steering committee appear to have sufficed to convince him that his calling was to resume his missionary endeavours in Natal. He attempted to do preliminary work on the reconstruction of Oscarsberg before leaving Sweden. This proved challenging. Letters from Bernhard Kraft, the German immigrant farmer to whom Witt had granted power of attorney shortly before leaving Natal, probably gave him headaches. In a letter which Witt received in November 1879, a few months after the conclusion of the war, Kraft informed him that he did not know when the British would leave Oscarsberg. With them present, it was impossible to resume agriculture there. Army horses and oxen were grazing in the fields, and a fort had been erected where Witt's house and chapel had stood. More worrisome was the behaviour of Zulu freebooters in the vicinity. As the German put it, "wenn der König auch gefangen und der Friede geschlossen ist, so gibt es doch Abteilungen, welche sich wenig um Krieg oder Frieden kümmern, sondern nach wie vor rauben und plündern". Because of this chaos, Kraft had postponed his return to the Swedish station.[79] A few weeks later he wrote that the British were still occupying the station. He feared that they might requisition it for use as a permanent camp.[80] Given this state of affairs, Witt proposed that the SKM sell Oscarsberg and instead try to penetrate conquered Zululand. He realised from pessimistic reports in *Norsk Missionstidende*, the periodical of the Norwegian Missionary Society, that after Wolseley's dissection of Cetshwayo's former kingdom into small principalities, some missionaries were experiencing difficulties in returning to their stations north of the Tugela. Witt therefore suggested that if it proved impossible to get a station in Zululand soon, the SKM should resume its work at Oscarsberg as soon as possible.[81]

In the meantime Kraft had begun to take measures to secure compensation for the damages the SKM had incurred at the station and to collect the rent for the military use of it. This was no easy task. On 18 March 1879, some eight weeks after the battle, Kraft submitted to the British military claims totalling £42 for hire of the station and its punt and ferry. At that time he also asked for compensation for damages to the station, although the amount requested at that time is not known.[82]

The British were not generous. In May Lieutenant Colonel John North Crealock informed Kraft that the army would pay £36 for the rent of the buildings at Oscarsberg for four months, £5 for one month's hire of the punt, £16.2.0 for timber used at the station, and £12 for a crop of maize on the property. The British officer stated that the claims which Kraft had preferred for further damages would be handled at an unspecified later date.[83] A claims board inspected the remains of the Oscarsberg station on 2 May. Meeting in Pietermaritzburg in October, it ruled that no further damages would be awarded. The chief reason given for this decision was that the damages had been inflicted by enemy forces, not by the British themselves.[84] In Witt's absence, Kraft appealed this decision almost immediately by challenging the logic on which it rested. He got nowhere. The board emphasised that even though the British government had leased the property hostile forces were responsible for its destruction. Moreover, the members expressed their belief that the power of attorney which Witt had granted Kraft did not authorise the latter to represent the SKM in cases involving the preferment of claims for damages.[85] Thus ended the Swedes' efforts to get significant compensation for the loss of the manse and chapel at Oscarsberg.

The British left the station in late October 1879, and by the following January Kraft had returned to it. His arrival was timely, as he succeeded in buying two bridges over the Buffalo River before people who hoped to acquire them and erect at the sites establishments for selling liquor to the Zulus could act.[86] Kraft again assessed the damages and reported them to the SKM. In a letter to Witt he emphasised that another appeal could be made, but he advised the Swede not to use his unpopular personal name if that were done.[87] There is no record of another appeal, however.

Interestingly enough, after receiving the rejection from the claims board but apparently before learning that Flygare had apologised to the steering committee

for agitating against him, Witt expressed an eleventh-hour desire to be released from the SKM. At the end of January 1880 he wrote to Thor Grafström (1827-1883), a member of the steering committee, that it was "apparent that I cannot return to Natal". Witt believed that "thanks to Mr Flygare I am regarded in the colony as a thief and a murderer". The disconsolate Swede suggested, however, that the SKM should press ahead in Southern Africa and advised the hiring of Kraft at a salary of £150 *per annum*.[88]

Witt changed his mind after the steering committee assured him that Flygare had apologised. He agreed to sail back to Natal in June 1880. The SKM arranged to commission three Swedish craftsmen to accompany him and rebuild Oscarsberg. No-one seems to have had any illusions about the cost of the enterprise. In May Witt travelled to Copenhagen to purchase a harmonium for the new station and certain carpentry tools which were not available in Helsingborg. He had to inform the steering committee that it was not possible to find an inexpensive harmonium which could be expected to arrive at Oscarsberg undamaged. Witt also pointed out that all of his time before the departure would have to be devoted to purchasing various kinds of equipment. By then the father of four children, he reminded the committee that in addition to clothing his growing family would require furniture, household articles, and other items which would entail considerable cost. The SKM had raised his personal salary to £200.[89]

Unfortunately, the extant records do not reveal much about specifically religious aspects of the preparations for returning to Oscarsberg. This is not surprising, because no theological or religious changes took place at this stage of the mission's history. The pastoral staff remained the same as it had on the eve of the war, despite the tensions between Witt and his colleagues. Oscarsberg was still the only real station the SKM had in Southern Africa. There is no reason to believe that Witt or the other Swedish missionaries in Natal intended to modify their evangelistic strategy in 1880, although Flygare was ministering to Europeans and Zulus alike in Durban and apparently wished to move upcountry. Theologically, Witt was not yet giving any indication of wavering from the position he had occupied before the war. This would all change during the 1880s, which was a crucial decade in Witt's tortuous spiritual odyssey. Owing both to his personal religious transformation and various other factors,

the 1880s also proved to be a seminal period in the history of the SKM in Southern Africa.

Notes

1. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 21 August 1878, in *Missions-Tidning*, III, no. 10 (1878), pp. 206-213.

2. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 21 October 1878.

3. Otto Witt (Greytown) to *Missions-Tidning*, 19 December 1877, in *Missions-Tidning*, III, no. 2 (1878), pp. 33-35.

4. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, C.L. Flygare (Durban) to SKM Steering Committee, 7 September 1879.

5. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, C.L. Flygare (Durban) to SKM Steering Committee, 14 October 1878.

6. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, F.L. Fristedt and C.L. Flygare (Durban) to SKM Steering Committee, 9 December 1878.

7. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to C.L. Flygare, 14 January 1879.

8. The historical literature dealing with the Anglo-Zulu War is rich if inconsistent in quality. Among the most valuable books are Donald R. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1966) and Charles Ballard and Andrew Duminy (eds.), *The Anglo-Zulu War: New Interpretations* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1981).

9. Norwegian Missionary Society Archives, box 132, folder 13, H. Schreuder (Ntumeni Mission Station) to Norwegian Missionary Society, 7 January 1873.

10. Norman Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835-1880* (London, Royal Historical Society, 1978), pp. 84-85.

11. Adrian Preston (ed.), *The South African Diaries of Sir Garnet Wolseley, 1875* (Cape Town, A.A. Balkema, 1971), p. 195.

12. Preston (ed.), *The South African Diaries of Sir Garnet Wolseley*, pp. 222-223.

13. "Fra Zululand og Natal", *Norsk Missions-Tidende*, XXXIII, no. 2 (January 1878), p. 36.

14. "Fra Zululandet", *Norsk Missions-Tidende*, XXXIII, no. 9 (March 1878), p. 113.

15. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to unspecified recipient, 8 March 1878, in *Missions-Tidning*, III, no. 6 (1878), pp. 134-135.

16. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 23 December 1878, in *Missions-Tidning*, IV, no. 2 (1879), pp. 35-36.

17. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears*, pp. 317, 399-400.

18. Alan Lloyd, *The Zulu War 1879* (London, Hart-Davis, MacGibbon), p. 89.

19. David Clammer, *The Zulu War* (Devon, David & Charles, 1973), pp. 41, 103.

20. Michael Glover, *Rorke's Drift. A Victorian Epic* (Cape Town, Purnell & Sons, 1975), pp. 84, 94.

21. Killie Campbell Africana Library, unaccessioned files no. 26303, P.S. Hervey, "Another Tale of Old Natal. Pioneer Family's Flight from Rorke's Drift".

22. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears*, pp. 396-436.

23. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, F. Becker (Greytown) to General H.H. Clifford, 20 October 1879.

24. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears*, p. 438.

25. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, "Förteckning å vår enskilda förlust vid Oscarsbergs brand".

26. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears, pp. 437-472.*

27. *The Times* (London), 6 March 1879.

28. Otto Witt, *Märkliga livserfarenheter. Minnen ur det flydda* (Stockholm, privately published, 1922), pp. 19-22.

29. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt, "Power of Attorney", 28 January 1879.

30. Otto Witt (Carlstad) to *Missions-Tidning*, June 1879, in *Missions-Tidning*, IV, no. 6 (1879), p. 127.

31. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (London) to SKM Steering Committee, 5 March 1879.

32. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 28 April 1879.

33. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Stockholm) to SKM Steering Committee, 2 May 1879.

34. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 7 May 1879.

35. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Stockholm) to SKM Steering Committee, 7 May 1879.

36. *The Times*, 6 March 1879.

37. *The Daily News* (London), 8 March 1879. This newspaper had carried Witt's account of the battles at his station and Isandhlwana on 6 March.

38. *The Times*, 13 March 1879.

39. *The Daily News*, 7 March 1879.

40. *Aftonbladet* (Stockholm), 10 March 1879; *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm), 10 March 1879.

41. *Öresunds-Posten* (Helsingborg), 11 March 1879.

42. "Från slagfältet i Sydafrika", *Ny Illustrerad Tidning*, XV, no. 11 (15 March 1879), pp. 84-87.

43. E.W.M. (Hampstead) to *The Standard*, 12 March 1879, quoted in *The Times of Natal*, 25 April 1879.

44. "Inquirer" (unspecified provenance) to *The Standard*, undated, quoted in *The Times of Natal*, 25 April 1879.

45. *The Natal Mercury* (Durban), 21 April 1879.

46. *The Natal Mercury*, 21 April 1879 (editorial).

47. *The Natal Mercury*, 21 April 1879.

48. W.C. Posselt (*sic*) (New Germany) to *The Natal Mercury*, 19 April 1879, in *The Natal Mercury*, 21 April 1879.

49. C.L. Flygare (Durban) to *The Natal Mercury*, undated, in *The Natal Mercury*, 21 April 1879.

50. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, C.L. Flygare (Durban) to SKM Steering Committee, 21 April 1879.

51. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, C.L. Flygare (Durban) to Otto Witt, 11 May 1879.

52. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II: 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, G.C. Cato (Durban) to Anton Sundberg, 18 April 1879.

53. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, F.L. Fristedt and C.L. Flygare (Durban) to Mssrs. Blackwood, Garland & Co., 26 March 1879.

54. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Blackwood, Garland & Co. (Durban) to F.L. Fristedt and C.L. Flygare, 4 April 1879.

55. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Durban) to SKM Steering Committee, 12 May 1879.

56. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, C.L. Flygare (Durban) to SKM Steering Committee, 14 August 1879.

57. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Motala) to Anton Sundberg, 14 June 1879.

58. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Carl Tornérhielm (Stockholm) to C.L. Flygare, 25 July 1879.

59. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 18 September 1879.

60. Witt (Motala) to Sundberg, 14 June 1879.

61. *Dagens Nyheter*, 19 March 1879.

62. *Öresunds-Posten* (Helsingborg), 21 March 1879.

63. *Öresunds-Posten*, 24 March 1879.

64. *Öresunds-Posten*, 29 and 31 March 1879.

65. *Öresunds-Posten*, 31 March and 15 April 1879.

66. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Helsingborg) to SKM Steering Committee, 8 September 1879.

67. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1883*, 18 September 1879.

68. Herman Schlyter, "Negerdop i Hälsingborg för 75 år sedan", *Lunds stifts Julbok*, XLVI (Malmö, Sydsvenska Dagbladets Aktiebolag, 1954), pp. 134-136.

69. *Helsingborgs Tidning*, 6 December 1879.

70. Otto Witt (Carlstad) to *Missions-Tidning*, June 1879, in *Missions-Tidning*, IV, no. 6 (1879), pp. 127-128.

71. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Helsingborg) to SKM Steering Committee, 21 January 1880.

72. Schlyter, "Negerdop i Hälsingborg för 75 år sedan", pp. 137-138.

73. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, James Dalzell (Gordon Memorial) to F.L. Fristedt, 14 July 1879.

74. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, K. Hohls (Hermannsburg) to Otto Witt, 27 August 1879.

75. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, O.C. Oftebro (Zinkwazi) to Otto Witt, 3 September 1879.

76. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Otto Witt (Stockholm) to SKM Steering Committee, 24 July 1879.

77. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, Anton Sundberg and Carl Tornérhielm (Stockholm) to C.L. Flygare, 18 September 1879.

78. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, C.L. Flygare (Durban) to SKM Steering Committee, 1 December 1879.

79. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, quoted in Otto Witt (Helsingborg) to SKM Steering Committee, 14 November 1879.

80. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 1, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1874-1879*, quoted in Otto Witt (Helsingborg) to SKM Steering Committee, 6 December 1879.

81. *Ibid.*

82. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, F. Becker (Greytown) to General H.H. Clifford, 20 October 1879.

83. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor til Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, John North Crealock (Utrecht) to Bernhard Kraft, 19 May 1879.

84. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, "Claim No. 75. Claim of Revd. Otto Witt".

85. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Claims Board (Pietermaritzburg) to Bernhard Kraft, 5 December 1879.

86. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Helsingborg) to SKM Steering Committee, 2 January 1880.

87. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Bernhard Kraft (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Otto Witt, 28 January 1880.

88. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Helsingborg) to Thor Grafström, 31 January 1880.

89. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Helsingborg) to SKM Steering Committee, 3 May 1880.

CHAPTER IV

RE-ESTABLISHING THE MISSION AT OSCARSBERG, 1880-1885

Witt's Return to Natal

The first half of the 1880s was a crucial quinquennium in the life of the SKM in Southern Africa. The fragile foundation which Otto Witt and, to a lesser extent, Fristedt and Flygare had laid before the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879 was shattered during that conflagration. Like many other missionaries, these three Swedes feared that the ravages of war would set back their efforts and antagonise for a long time the people whom they were seeking to evangelise. Witt's absence from the field from January 1879 until August 1880 was in itself serious enough and a great matter of concern to him, even though he believed that Oscarsberg was in the capable practical hands of his agriculturalist, Bernhard Kraft. In addition to the enormous task of re-establishing missionary work there, Witt would have to face the hostility of the colonists whom his comments in London had antagonised and seek reconciliation with his equally irate colleagues.

Small wonder, then, that Witt sailed to Natal with fear and trembling. He left Sweden on 9 June 1880 without his wife and four children, who remained temporarily in that country. Josef Umkwelantaba, his young Zulu protegé, remained in Stockholm to study at Johannelund. In a letter written en route to Durban to his supporters in Sweden, Witt admitted that "in the colony of Natal there is strong opposition to me because of my candid but careless remarks in England about the colonists' relations with the blacks". He did not believe that he would be isolated at Oscarsberg, however, because accompanying him were three Swedish artisans whom the SKM had hired to rebuild that station. Two of these men were bachelors; the other brought his wife and young son. All three artisans had expressed their intention to settle at or near Oscarsberg after completing their work at the station. This led Witt, who before the Anglo-Zulu War had briefly sought to arrange the acquisition of land for immigrants from Sweden from the government of Natal, to envisage the establishment of a small Swedish

Christian colony near the Buffalo River. The settlement of such Europeans in close proximity to Oscarsberg, he believed, would prove beneficial for influencing and supporting African converts to Christianity. The presence of six missionaries from the Hermannsburg Missionary Society on board the ship may also have prompted Witt to renew this dream in a more specifically missionary form. He praised the Hermannsburg model of combining missionary work with colonisation (despite his earlier criticism of the fact that Hermannsburg missionaries usually had to devote part of their time to agriculture) and willingly gave these Germans shipboard lessons in the Zulu language. With regard to the specifically religious tasks that lay before him at Oscarsberg, Witt declared that one of his priorities was the training of "native teachers", because such indigenous co-workers "are much better than we at explaining to their heathen brethren the truths of Christianity". In this regard Witt looked forward to the eventual return of Josef Umkwelantaba from Sweden and believed that the young Zulu would be of great help in translating Swedish materials into his mother tongue.[1]

To some extent Witt's apprehensions about returning to Natal proved well-founded. Bernhard Kraft met him in Durban in July, as did a small storm of journalistic protest. The initial attack on Witt took the form of derisive sarcasm. "That heroical and noble-minded Swedish missionary, the Rev. Otto Witt, returned to Natal on Thursday", reported one journalist in *The Natal Mercury.* "Our readers will remember the illustrious part taken by this divine in the defence of Rorke's Drift, and the generosity with which he subsequently defended the colonists from odious aspersion and calumny in Downing Street". This unidentified reporter also predicted that Witt's conduct during the Anglo-Zulu War would render it difficult for him to work effectively as a missionary because he had lost face amongst the Zulus.[2]

In a less hostile account published in the same newspaper, a journalist conceded that Witt appeared to be in "the best of health" and was accompanied by ten other Swedes, four of whom were missionaries, who intended to settle at Oscarsberg. They were to proceed there after securing permission to carry firearms in Natal.[3] Displeased with what he regarded as inaccurate reporting,

Fristedt, still in Durban, wrote immediately to the *Mercury* and challenged the veracity of its account. There were not ten Swedes in addition to Witt, he emphasised, but only four, and none of them was a missionary. The remaining six people, moreover, had nothing to do with the SKM; they were merely immigrants who "had only attached themselves to Mr. Witt's party for the journey as far as Durban".[4] The editor of the *Mercury* retorted indignantly that he merely had printed statements which Witt had made.[5]

In the hope of avoiding confrontations with vengeful colonists, Witt purchased a horse and rode through sparsely populated areas of Natal instead of following the usual route between Durban and Dundee. He was not entirely successful, however; in one town enraged people who discovered his identity threatened to tar and feather him. Witt escaped and reached the Tugela and crossed it into Zululand. This circuitous path eventually brought him to Rorke's Drift and Oscarsberg on 21 August. Some of the Swedes who had accompanied him to Durban had arrived at the station a fortnight earlier.[6]

Upon arriving at Oscarsberg, Witt and his colleagues plunged into their work. Fristedt had reached the station a few days before Witt, and together the two men soon undertook specifically religious work. Initially this was limited to holding morning and evening devotions for the Zulu employees at Oscarsberg. Witt foresaw either himself or Fristedt soon undertaking short evangelistic tours on Sundays as a means of coming into contact with other indigenes in the area. The task of practical reconstruction was also underway. Despite unusual winter rain, the three Swedish artisans were already erecting a temporary building to accommodate themselves, Witt, and Fristedt.[7]

Developing a Multifaceted Ministry at Oscarsberg

Witt and Fristedt laboured intensely not only to recreate the mission that had existed at Oscarsberg before the battle of 22 and 23 January 1879, but also to expand their outreach near that station. The war had also wreaked havoc on African settlement in the area and forced many Zulus to leave. Witt found that

upon his return to Oscarsberg only three kraals were still standing on the station's land. This in itself compelled him and Fristedt to expand the geographical scope of their endeavours. They wanted to anyway, and Witt had not forgotten that from the outset one goal of the SKM had been to establish a station in Zululand. Tensions between that now crushed monarchy and Natal had prevented Witt from pursuing the matter during the late 1870s, but the defeat of Cetshwayo and the dissection of his erstwhile kingdom seemed to provide more auspicious circumstances for its realisation in 1880. Accordingly, Witt and Fristedt undertook an exploratory journey across the Buffalo River in November 1880. During that "long and difficult" trek, two newly appointed chiefs assured the Swedes that they were welcome to establish mission stations in their domains. One, in fact, who Witt emphasised was not a Christian, asked them to do so as soon as possible. Witt interpreted this as God's answer to his prayer that the SKM be allowed to enter Zululand soon.[8]

The vision of undertaking long-term work there became particularly relevant in late 1880 when Flygare again asked the steering committee of the SKM to purchase his land in southern Natal and found a station on it. In a sharply worded reply, Carl Tornérhielm of the committee informed him that "it has never been the intention of the leadership [of the SKM] to send missionaries to the colony of Natal, but rather to Zululand". In response to Flygare's threat to leave the SKM if it did not relieve him of his debts by purchasing his land, Tornérhielm declared that he was free to leave and suggested that some other Lutheran missionary society might be interested in his services.[9] Flygare remained, despite his obvious dissatisfaction with his circumstances. The tension between him and Witt appears to have continued through the end of 1880. Only the geographical distance separating the two men ameliorated it to some extent at that time.

For reasons which do not seem to have been recorded, the SKM did not immediately acquire a site for a station in Zululand. The focal point of its endeavours in Southern Africa remained Oscarsberg during the early 1880s. The level of religious activity there soon rose as Witt recreated a programme of missionary activities, and the spiritual life of the station became much greater than had been the case before the war. In April 1881, eight months after returning to Oscars-

berg, Witt reported to the SKM that an average of between sixty and seventy people attended his services. He did not state how many of those hearers were baptised, but there is no reason to believe that more than a few were. In any case, Witt seemed cautiously optimistic about the prospects for forming a regular congregation. He believed that "several of the people from the kraals nearby seem to come to the services because of a serious desire to hear the Word of God. They say that they are convinced of its truth, but they are not willing to give up their heathen practices and devote their lives to God".[10]

By that time the new chapel had nearly been completed. The building was six metres wide and ten metres long. By Witt's estimate, it could accommodate approximately eighty people. He described it as being in "purely Gothic style" and was clearly proud of the structure and the men who had erected it. "What they have accomplished is admired by everyone who comes here", Witt wrote of the three artisans who had accompanied him from Sweden. "The Swedish name has already gained respect in the colony", he beamed. Witt hoped to be able to fulfil a request which Anglican Bishop William A.K. Macrorie (1831-1905) had made of him to arrange for more Swedish builders to come to Natal and construct houses of worship at Anglican mission stations. Even the British Resident in occupied Zululand, Melmoth Osborn (1833-1899), turned to Witt in the hope of getting artisans from Sweden.[11]

Despite the delay in establishing a station in Zululand and the heavy demands on his time at Oscarsberg, Witt took the initiative in extending his personal ministry to the other side of the Buffalo River on an occasional basis. Disputes over land tenure between Hlubi, the Basuto chief whom the British had placed over the area immediately opposite Rorke's Drift in Zululand, and Afrikaners in the area gave Witt one such opportunity. Hearing that Hlubi had mobilised hundreds of warriors to meet his white antagonists, he crossed the Buffalo on horseback and asked him for permission to preach to his army. Hlubi, whom Witt described as "a heathen, though one who has respect for the Word of God and wants to have his people taught from it", acceded to this request. Through an "excellent interpreter" who rendered Witt's Zulu into the Basuto language, the energetic Swede preached to the army of approximately three hundred men on

Romans 14:8 ("If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's".). Witt reported that "many" of the soldiers seemed to be affected by his sermon.[12] There is no evidence, however, that he continued to evangelise in Hlubi's territory on more than a sporadic basis. In all likelihood the language barrier and Witt's priorities at Oscarsberg militated against that.

At that station the presence of a growing number of Zulus also gave opportunities for broadening the ministry. The inconsistency of their presence made this problematic, however. Witt complained in April 1881 that he had an average of eight to ten African employees at Oscarsberg but that they tended to work for only a few months before going home to rest for half a year. Indeed, this was one of his few recorded lamentations during his first year back at Oscarsberg after returning from Sweden. The instability tested his patience with regard to both evangelism and teaching. He and Fristedt soothed their nerves after teaching the resident Zulus every evening by gathering a few of them for oral reading of the English Bible for an hour. Such a technique, Witt pointed out, helped the indigenes who participated to gain more insight into the Bible and simultaneously improve their English.[13]

After a full year at Oscarsberg, during which his wife and children joined him, Witt still witnessed progress in his work there. In August 1881 it seemed to him that "amongst the blacks there is actually more interest now than previously in attending the services". By then Witt had stopped arranging worship in Swedish for the handful of Swedes at Oscarsberg and was using exclusively a Zulu liturgy. Curiously enough, despite his claim that interest in worship had risen, he reported that average attendance was then approximately fifty, in other words about thirty per cent lower than he had said was the case only four months earlier. The service was still very simple, consisting of songs, prayers, and a sermon. Witt did not mention such elements as a confession of sin, creed, or offering. Nor did he yet celebrate the Lord's Supper at Oscarsberg. "I do not believe it is appropriate to begin to celebrate the Eucharist before I have a real congregation", reasoned Witt.[14]

Prior to the Anglo-Zulu War, the hope had been widespread amongst missionaries to the Zulus, especially those who laboured in Zululand, that British military intervention and the defeat of Cetshwayo would crush what was perceived as Zulu national arrogance which lessened receptivity to the Gospel and individuals' fear of accepting Christianity because of fear of persecution. The subjugation of that kingdom, it was commonly believed, would be one factor leading to waves of conversions. After the conclusion of the war, however, it soon became apparent that some of these hopes had been unduly inflated. If one examines evaluations made of the receptivity of the Zulus in general, and especially in Zululand, to Christianity immediately following the war, one does not find a consensus as to whether a more auspicious era had dawned. This was particularly true in the Norwegian Missionary Society, which provides an almost ideal basis for comparison with Witt and the SKM. Some missionaries from Norway were incautiously optimistic. Christian Oftebro (1842-1888), for example, a medical doctor who had entered the field in 1876, contrasted Zulu attitudes towards missionary work before and after the war. "Before the conquest of Zululand", he generalised without masking his cultural prejudices, "there was amongst the people quite simply no desire to learn, and it was almost impossible to hire even the most necessary servants to be able to live in the country". In 1880, however, "on the whole the Zulus have changed much for the better during the tribulations of recent times. The previous arrogance and conceitedness of raw power have disappeared without a trace. They are now modest in their behaviour towards whites and say that they are willing to be our servants".[15] His uncle, veteran missionary Ommund Oftebro at Eshowe, agreed with the culturally condescending generalisation that the Zulus' "previously often shameless behaviour towards the white man no longer exists. The white man is now lord; he is addressed politely, flattered, and feared". The elder Oftebro doubted, however, that this subjugation would necessarily make the transmission of the Gospel significantly easier. He perceived that "the Zulu people are still stubborn arch-conservatives who remain indifferent to everything they cannot eat, drink, or roll their bodies into on a chilly day or night".[16] Undoubtedly the challenges of propagating the Gospel remained great, but the Norwegians did in fact see more

fruits of their labours during the years after the Anglo-Zulu War. In 1879 there were only about 300 Christians at all the Norwegian Missionary Society stations in Natal and Zululand. The figure rose sharply during the early 1880s, however, and between the termination of the 1879 war and the declaration of the British protectorate over Zululand in 1887 there had been several hundred baptisms at those stations.[17]

Oscarsberg did not lie in Zululand, of course, but its proximity to the defeated kingdom and location remote from most towns in Natal made it susceptible to developments across the Buffalo River. This fact, coupled with the troubled brief history of the station, probably made Witt share the belief that a more promising era was at hand. He had, after all, made disparaging remarks about Cetshwayo before the war and shared the belief that religious persecution in Zululand posed a major obstacle to missionary work there. Yet it should be emphasised that there is no evidence that while rebuilding Oscarsberg in the early 1880s he believed that the number of conversions there would grow exponentially. Indeed, in his fairly extensive extant correspondence he does not appear to have been so naive as to think that his task, and that of his colleagues in the SKM, would be an easy one at all. To the extent that Witt was optimistic, it was because he saw continuing small signs, especially in the resurrection of the physical facilities and the development of his school at Oscarsberg. Looking ahead momentarily, as will be seen later in the present chapter the few SKM congregations in Natal grew somewhat numerically during the first half of the 1880s. Strictly speaking, they expanded almost exponentially, but that growth must be considered in light of the fact that each of them began with only a very few members, some of whom were the missionaries and their families. The termination of the Anglo-Zulu War does not appear to have made a major or immediate impact on the history of the SKM apart from the fact that it allowed Witt to rebuild Oscarsberg. Whatever the expectations of the Swedish missionaries may have been during the early 1880s, and no more than Witt did either Fristedt or Flygare seem particularly optimistic about rapid growth, these men must have known that they had embarked on a very arduous task.

Activities not specifically of a religious nature developed nearly as quickly at Oscarsberg as did those which were essential parts of spiritual life there during the early 1880s, and some contributed to it. "Music has a great deal of influence on the blacks", Witt observed, "so I expect great things of our musical instruction". His musically gifted wife began to teach children in the vicinity on almost a daily basis, although what she included in her instruction besides the "singing of simple, rhythmic melodies" is not recorded. Witt thought that many of the young Zulus had beautiful voices, and he found joy in accompanying them on the flute while his wife sometimes did so on the organ. By 1881 he had taught at least one boy to play the flute, and he and his wife were considering tutoring some of the most talented children at the organ. This musical emphasis was directly related to evangelisation; Witt had translated into Zulu several of the songs which Ira D. Sankey (1840-1908), the vocalist who collaborated with the renowned nineteenth-century American evangelist Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), had popularised on both sides of the Atlantic. Apart from these forms of musical instruction, Mrs Witt planned to teach sewing as soon as needles and other necessary materials arrived at Oscarsberg. Like many other missionaries, Witt found the shortage of maps, picture books, and other visual instructional materials frustrating. He pleaded with the leadership of the SKM to send more of those items soon, arguing that African pupils were mentally so far behind European children of the same age that visual aids were absolutely necessary.

A basic social ministry went hand-in-hand with early educational endeavours at Oscarsberg. Supporters of foreign missions in Helsingborg, probably some of Witt's former parishioners to whom he had made an appeal during his stay there in 1879 and 1880, sent red-trimmed white uniforms to the station for use by the children who received instruction there. Witt believed that this minor blandishment was an effective means of attracting young Zulus who otherwise may have been reluctant to attend school.[18]

Indeed, educational work at Oscarsberg seemed quite encouraging to Witt during the early 1880s, a fact which is particularly significant because he eventually turned radically against that facet of his ministry. Like most other missionaries who established schools, he combined religious with secular

instruction. Moreover, like most of his Lutheran counterparts, Witt employed Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* as the cornerstone of his efforts to impart fundamental Christian doctrines to prospective converts. As early as October 1881 he was pleased to report that the children at the Oscarsberg school had not only memorised the *Small Catechism* but could explain its parts in their own words. If this generalisation can be taken at face value, it testifies to a high degree of effectiveness in rote catechetical pedagogy. On the other hand, Witt encountered major hindrances in teaching the other subjects. Reading proceeded slowly. After many months of instruction, only two of the children could actually read, and their ability to do so did not extend beyond short words. On the whole, Witt still believed in late 1881 that God was blessing his educational ministry and that the desire of the young Zulus at and near Oscarsberg to attend school had increased. "They never fail to come unless they have a valid reason", he declared.[19]

In 1882, after more instructional materials had arrived at Oscarsberg, Witt reported "apparently great interest" amongst his Zulu pupils for his efforts to teach them. He then had fourteen scholars, the eldest of whom was over forty and the youngest only six years old. The simple curriculum for all fourteen consisted of singing, reading, arithmetic, catechism, and Bible history. In addition to these subjects, Witt was then teaching two of the most gifted Zulus to write their own language. To impart a basic knowledge of the Bible, he used the series of pictures then employed in Swedish primary schools, a means which he found effective. Arithmetic proved more challenging, owing to its poorly developed state in Zulu culture generally and the cumbersome way of expressing numbers in that language. Like many other missionary teachers, therefore, Witt resorted to having his pupils do their arithmetic in English. An abacus also facilitated their learning that subject. Later in 1882 he added geography to the curriculum as a means of developing the children's general understanding of the world and expanding their cultural horizons. He found them receptive to his emphasis on the customs and mores of other cultures and pleaded with Archbishop Sundberg to send him more illustrated books to use in this regard.[20]

Witt seemed particularly encouraged when he could see a bridge between his educational efforts and conversions to Christianity, a phenomenon which does not seem to have taken place frequently before the mid-1880s. One example, however, was the case of the pupil who was more than forty years old. Witt was delighted that this individual seemed to be on the path leading to conversion to Christianity. The signs which the Swede perceived reflected a combination of European cultural captivity and acceptance of universal Christian values: "He has put aside his heathen customs, wears clothing, wants to build a proper house for himself, and loves to hear the Word of God".[21]

Progress in the educational arena prompted Witt to conceive more ambitious plans for expanding that form of missionary work at Oscarsberg in the early 1880s. Before the end of 1881 he wrote to Archbishop Sundberg in Uppsala and made two proposals for doing so. The first involved bringing more Zulu children to Oscarsberg by establishing a home for them there. Like many other missionaries, Witt had discovered that people who resided at his station, especially those who were in their most formative years, were often the most receptive both to the Gospel and European cultural influences. He therefore suggested that he be allowed to make efforts to attract more of them to Oscarsberg. Doing so, however, involved two problems. First, his overworked wife was not in a position to care for even more children. Witt therefore proposed that the SKM send a Swedish housekeeper from Helsingborg who would attend to the youth. Secondly, he feared that the growing number of young Zulus at Oscarsberg would have to be kept apart from his own small children so that the latter would not be subjected to unspecified immoral African influences. Witt's fears in this regard, however blatantly racist they appear in retrospect, were probably fairly typical of missionaries at that time. It was hardly a mere coincidence that in the mid-1870s the Norwegian Missionary Society established a school for Norwegian children at its Umpumulo station near Mapumulo. Shortly after the conclusion of the Anglo-Zulu War it was reorganised there under the leadership of Nils Braatvedt (1847-1943), an intensely pietistic pastor from southern Norway. He felt it desirable to segregate the European pupils entrusted to him from young Africans in order to protect the former from such harmful influences

as "laziness, indifference to the Word of God, and crudeness in speech and behaviour, because these are the most prominent amongst the natives".[22] In addition to establishing a home for small Zulu children, Witt proposed creating a trades school for older African boys. He argued that the time was particularly auspicious to take this step because the Swedish carpenter who had accompanied him to Oscarsberg in 1880 was willing to remain there and serve as a teacher.[23]

Neither a children's home nor a trades school immediately appeared at Oscarsberg, although the former institution did so relatively soon. Before that happened, however, there was a further growth of religious life at the station. Observance of the annual liturgical cycle became, at least in part, one component of spiritual life there. Festivities were, as one might expect, especially popular. Approximately 150 Zulus attended Christmas services in 1881, many of them, as Witt observed, dressed in their best clothing. Preaching to them on Luke 2, he focused on the meaning of the holiday, paying especial attention to the fact that Jesus had been born in a barn. In doing so, Witt confronted a grass-roots problem of the cultural contextualisation of the Gospel. Ironically enough, he discovered that his remarks about the venue of Jesus' birth made a strong impression on his hearers, precisely because they did not have a concept of keeping livestock in buildings as opposed to cattle byres and similar open-air enclosures. The celebration of the Nativity of Christ on the evening of 24 December had a distinctively Swedish flavour, not only in terms of the caramels and other delicacies familiar in Sweden but also in the custom of decorating and lighting the candles on a Christmas tree, symbolism which Witt sought to explain to the Zulu guests. Cultural conflicts marred the festivities, however. Only about one-third as many people attended the service which Witt arranged on Christmas Day, a decline which saddened him and perhaps made him question the sincerity of many of those who had come the evening before. Moreover, prior to Christmas the inhabitants of a kraal at Oscarsberg had arranged to have a wedding and beer party on a Sunday, events which attracted most of the Zulus nearby and concomitantly reduced attendance at worship to only a few. Witt had felt it necessary to threaten to order the inhabitants of the kraal to leave Oscarsberg permanently if they did not respect the sanctity of Sunday.[24] Incidents of

this sort were relatively common in Southern African mission fields during the nineteenth century, as Witt may have been aware. In any case, there is no indication that they discouraged him a great deal. On the contrary, he continued to labour energetically and along familiar lines during the early 1880s.

The symbolic keystone of the physical re-establishment of the Oscarsberg station was the dedication of the new chapel in June 1882. Witt presided at the service, at which Fristedt and two representatives of the Norwegian Missionary Society, namely Hans Leisegang (1838-1914) and Karl Larsen Titlestad (1832-1924), assisted. Illness prevented Flygare from attending, and unrest in Zululand reduced the number of missionaries from various societies who otherwise may have participated. Witt also lamented that bad weather caused many of the Zulus whom he had expected to see to stay home. Nevertheless, the service proceeded in the Zulu language, with Leisegang preaching what Witt described as a "gripping sermon" about how God was seeking people to prepare for them a house above when they had to leave their earthly dwellings. After the sermon, Witt called to the front of the sanctuary a young male Zulu named Umxetyulwa who had initially received baptismal instruction at a German mission station and subsequently at Oscarsberg.[25] After Witt asked him questions about basic Christian doctrines, Umxetyulwa professed his faith and was baptised. He received the name "Andreas" as a sign of his conversion.[26]

This and a handful of other baptisms, the dedication of the station's chapel, and various other factors appear to have confirmed Witt's perception that his work at Oscarsberg was being blessed and that its future was promising. He wrote to Sundberg in late 1882 and assured the archbishop that "the work of the mission has proceeded very satisfactorily. The chapel is nearly full every Sunday, and the children attend school regularly". Demographic factors also seemed to be working in favour of Oscarsberg. Witt noted that during the past two years the station's property, on which only a handful of Zulus had resided when he returned from Sweden in 1880, had attracted a large number of them. Moreover, the inhabitants of many kraals wished to move to Oscarsberg in order to make it possible for their children to attend school there. To some Zulus, residing at a mission station seemed preferable to inhabiting government land, for in the latter

case they could be required to work on road construction for the colony of Natal.[27]

In a review of his career in the SKM from 1876 until 1883 which Witt wrote a few months after making these remarks to Sundberg, however, he tempered his comments slightly. He admitted that a young Zulu who had been a catechumen with Umxetyulwa had quit receiving instruction and decided not to be baptised. Furthermore, Witt had little hope that more than a small number of adult Zulus would convert to Christianity or even become literate. "Only a few begin to learn, and still fewer complete [their schooling]", he wrote realistically. Yet these few minor defeats did not prevent Witt from declaring emphatically that there were many encouraging signs, especially with regard to the younger African generation.[28] Moreover, at least as late as April 1885 he regarded his educational work at Oscarsberg as an important instrument of evangelisation. At that time Witt described how some of the children in the station's school
has memorised as many as seventy Bible verses. He regarded this as a "valuable treasury, which by God's grace will someday become a blessing, even though at the moment it may seem to be a dead letter".[29] The date of this affirmation of the value of educational ministry at Oscarsberg is significant because, as will be seen in the next chapter, in the mid-1880s Witt began to make disparaging remarks about that aspect of his work, and shortly thereafter he gradually began to neglect it in order to pursue evangelism on a full-time basis.

Changes in the SKM Personnel in Natal

One of the other reasons for Witt's apparent contentedness with his work at Oscarsberg during this period may have been the partial resolution of conflicts between him and some of his colleagues. Most significantly, the acrimonious relations between Witt on the one hand and Fristedt and Flygare on the other softened during the first half of 1881. The three men met in June of that year and resolved to put their differences behind them. In a joint communique sent to the leaders of the SKM, they conceded that they had failed to show each other

brotherly love in the past and vowed to co-operate harmoniously in future.[30] Flygare and Fristedt wrote to the steering committee three days later and confessed that they had sinned against Witt, although they did not specify how they had done so. Flygare added in a postscript, however, that his willingness to sign the letter did not mean anything more than that he was conciliatory towards Witt "insofar as my conscience, bound by the Word of God, permits me to be".[31] Precisely what he meant with this qualification is unclear. In all likelihood Flygare still harboured ill-will against Witt but was willing to co-operate with him in a grudging spirit of reconciliation for the benefit of the SKM.

The leadership of the SKM had probably insisted that the three men finally resolve their differences. When Witt returned to Oscarsberg in mid-1880, Flygare was still working in Durban. Later that year he moved to a new station which the SKM purchased for him. Fristedt, however, had arrived at Oscarsberg shortly before Witt, and circumstances had compelled these two strong-willed men to work with each other despite the harsh words they had spoken and written about each other the year before. Fristedt was clearly displeased with this arrangement and had written to the steering committee to request placement elsewhere. His petition had come to naught, however, when Carl Tornérhielm had replied that the SKM believed there was enough work to do at Oscarsberg to keep both of them occupied there for the time being. He had added that having two missionaries labour together also conformed to a Biblical model and insisted that the leadership of the SKM was not ascribing guilt exclusively to either Fristedt or Witt for the strained relations between them.[32] Unfortunately, the correspondence between the missionaries in the field does not appear to be extant, so it is impossible to know what transpired between them between late 1880 and June 1881 to bring them to a state of at least superficial reconciliation.

The departure of Bernhard Kraft, the German agriculturalist who had worked at Oscarsberg, was less important to the history of the SKM in Natal than the rapprochement between Witt and his ordained colleagues, but it nevertheless sheds light on Witt's personality and the cultural attitudes he had brought to the field. Keenly aware of Kraft's importance to the SKM during his own absence

from Oscarsberg in 1879 and 1880 and convinced of his continuing value there, Witt had pleaded with the steering committee in November 1880 to send Kraft "a few words in English or German thanking him for his selfless efforts" on its behalf. Witt also emphasised the desirability of retaining the German agriculturalist in the service of the SKM.[33]

Within a few months, however, Kraft had left Oscarsberg. Witt took his departure with equanimity, which may indicate that there had been tension between the two men. In fact, Witt seemed pleased that his German assistant was no longer at the station, even though it meant an increase in the number of his own tasks there. "One characteristic of the blacks is their unwillingness to obey more than one master", he generalised condescendingly, "and Mr Kraft, having ruled over them for such a long time, did not want to remain [at Oscarsberg] unless he retained control over them". That situation seemed infeasible to Witt, who believed that "the primary condition for a missionary to be able to do his work with authority is that he must be able to dominate the Kaffers". Witt hoped to hire as Kraft's successor an otherwise unidentified "pious Norwegian colonist" who was then working in Durban, but that does not appear to have happened.[34]

Expanding the SKM Field in Natal

As mentioned earlier, the termination of the Anglo-Zulu War revived hopes in the SKM of expanding its field into conquered Zululand. Why Witt and Fristedt did not accept the offers of the two Zulu chiefs who had invited them to establish a station across the Buffalo River in 1880 is difficult to understand. Perhaps they were still too preoccupied with rebuilding Oscarsberg to think in terms of geographical expansion until at least 1882. In addition to their missionary work there, Witt devoted a great deal of time to the construction of a manse for himself and his family. Initially they inhabited the new chapel, which was dedicated in June 1882. The residence was a large structure; in 1881 Witt wrote that 12 000 bricks had already been made for it and that he had employed a dozen Zulu labourers for the purpose of making some 20 000 more.[35] Before

being able to move into their manse, the Witts discovered that winters at Oscarsberg did not necessarily correspond to the stereotypes of African weather then current in Europe. On one occasion they found themselves shivering when the temperature plummeted to 3 degrees Celsius and they did not have fuel with which to build a fire.[36]

Instead of seeking to penetrate Zululand in the early 1880s, the SKM sought to strengthen its position in north-western Natal, hoping to create there a well-equipped staging area for an eventual crossing of the Buffalo River. On 28 June 1881, a day after Witt, Fristedt, and Flygare had promised in a letter to the steering committee of the SKM to settle their differences, that body approved the purchase of a farm called "Amoibie" a few kilometres south of Oscarsberg. The price for 532 acres of land was £320. From the outset the steering committee intended to station Fristedt at Amoibie. He had moved there by August 1881, but the following month Witt found him bedridden with what Witt diagnosed as rheumatic fever. Fristedt consequently had to return to Oscarsberg, and the development of Amoibie as a station slowed considerably.[37]

Meanwhile the SKM had finally acquired a station at which to place Flygare. In June 1880, while Witt was en route to Natal, the steering committee asked Flygare to find a place which he could use on a temporary basis. He did so within two months. Flygare signed a contract to use what he called "an especially advantageous place", a farm called Aangelegen near the Mooi River some twenty kilometres north of Greytown. Having spent approximately fourteen years in Natal, he seemed little inclined to leave the relative security of that colony to enter Zululand. Flygare therefore argued that the SKM ought to purchase Aangelegen outright and consolidate its work in Natal, where there were more Zulus than north of the Tugela in Zululand proper. Initially he entertained thoughts of continuing his ministry to Scandinavians in Durban while establishing missionary work at Aangelegen, but as the two sites lay more than 150 kilometres from each other he never seriously attempted to divide his time between them. Flygare consequently rented his house on the Berea to a Swedish maritime captain and moved with his family to Aangelegen in September 1880.[38]

Witt was enthusiastic about Aangelegen, and the reasons for his enthusiasm reveal much about his views of the economic and geographical aspects of missionary strategy at that time. He found it especially encouraging that Aangelegen lay in a lowland area which attracted large numbers of Zulus because of its warmth, agricultural potential, and good grazing. The station was quite accessible by road from Greytown. Witt, still impressed by the Hermannsburg model of combining missionary work and agricultural colonisation, thought that Aangelegen had great economic potential and that a mission there could thus be nearly self-supporting. Zulu families paid an annual rental fee of £1 to reside on the land, thus assuring the owners or lessees of at least £70 per annum. The cultivation of maize, oats, and potatoes could yield another £100 annually, and the sale of wood and other produce would raise the total income from the property to over £200 a year. Witt, like Flygare, believed the SKM should purchase Aangelegen outright. He emphasised, however, that the task of administering economic activities there should not be laid upon missionaries, who already had their hands full with evangelism and other religious and educational work, but be given to a "practical man" whom the SKM should pay a salary and guarantee a percentage of the proceeds from the property. Finally, Witt believed that the Zulus at Aangelegen were in general "particularly receptive to the Word of God, possibly because the previous owner treated them so severely".[39]

The placement of Flygare on this tract of more than 6 000 acres gave the SKM a much broader geographical base in Natal than hitherto had been the case. Looking ahead momentarily, Flygare's wife died in 1882, and he succumbed the following year after nearly drowning in a flooded river. This reduced the ranks of seasoned Swedish Lutheran missionaries in Southern Africa to two, namely Witt and Fristedt, and diminished the chances of their extending the SKM's field in the short term.

The Children's Home at Oscarsberg

It will be recalled that in 1881 Witt had proposed to Archbishop Sundberg the establishment at Oscarsberg of a home for Zulu children, principally as a means for influencing them with Christian values and culture at a formative age. Little was done to realise this plan until 1884, however, after approximately two years during which several unbaptised Zulu parents had convinced the Witts to take their children into their manse. This created practical problems, despite the generous size of the building, which had only two guest rooms. Mrs Witt, moreover, was becoming overworked. Witt consequently renewed his suggestion that the SKM send a servant girl from Sweden to assist at the station, especially in the care of African children there. Early in 1883 Witt received word from the steering committee of the SKM that he could proceed with the recruitment of such a person, something which he seems to have begun before getting official sanction. Witt and his wife sent letters to several people in Sweden, but for many months their search for a volunteer was fruitless. On the other hand, friends in the Skåne region of southern Sweden promised financial support for a children's home, and Witt was confident that further assistance would be forthcoming from sponsors in Stockholm.[40]

In 1884 the steering committee of the SKM approved the establishment of the home. It agreed to contribute to it financially and to compensate Witt for accommodating African children in the manse.[41] A separate building was not erected at that time, however. The committee's action was essentially to approve the hiring of a woman to care for the children at Oscarsberg. That person, who would play a major role not only in the history of Oscarsberg but also in Witt's spiritual odyssey, was Ida Jonatanson (1859-1950). She arrived at the station on 4 September 1884.[42] Jonatanson and the Witts began to operate the new children's home on 2 October. Choosing to admit only girls, they accepted four immediately and three more within a few weeks. Jonatanson, who does not appear to have had previous experience in Southern Africa, found her task a challenging one. Two of the girls who came to Oscarsberg were larger than she, and one of them, in her words, "had a wild and defiant appearance". The young

Swedish matron soon discovered that her suspicions of potential defiance were not totally unfounded. "At first they attempted to do whatever they wanted", she wrote without specifying what form or forms this rebelliousness took. "But I told them then that I demanded unconditional and immediate obedience from each of them, and that under no circumstances were they to leave the children's home when I was indoors, and never without asking for permission to do so". Jonatanson's severity soon began to bear fruit. She reported some two and a half months after arriving at Oscarsberg that the girls' defiant attitude had begun to soften and that whenever she requested them to do something they invariably responded affirmatively. Jonatanson did not initially serve as a formal teacher, however, a position which Witt continued to fill at the station.[43]

Witt, who had not disguised his belief that missionaries had to maintain authority over the Africans at their stations, praised the strong-willed Jonatanson from the outset as highly suited for her work. He probably revealed something about his attitude towards the function of the home by emphasising as an example of her effectiveness with the children the fact that the smallest girl, who was only six years old, "follows her new foster mother like a faithful dog and has hardly cast a glance at her parents and siblings, who come here every day". In short, Witt unabashedly believed that it was permissible to sever the natural ties between Zulu children and their families in order to win the former for the Gospel. He also thought that the girls who stayed at Oscarsberg should contribute their labour to the operation of the station. The eldest girl, then in her early twenties, was one whom he had previously baptised and whom the Witts intended to retain as a maid. Despite the authoritarian strain in his personality, Witt did not believe that he could compel any young Zulus to come to the new home. Its success, he realised, depended partly on the willingness of children and their parents to avail themselves of it voluntarily. Moreover, Witt understood that for practical reasons it would be impossible to accept all the young Africans who at some time might wish to reside at Oscarsberg. He was grateful that a Swedish missionary auxiliary in Färila and a group of friends in Helsingborg had each pledged to support one girl at the home.[44]

Witt continued to laud the children's home and Jonatanson. One of the reasons why the new institution was so important in his view was the part it could play in winning Zulu females to Christianity. Witt's thinking about this was not fully typical of missionaries at that time, however. At the Norwegian Lutheran and the Scandinavian free church mission stations in Natal and Zululand, the majority of the Zulu converts to Christianity during the nineteenth century were women. To be sure, the flight of many males to industrial and mining areas late in the century created a sexual imbalance in many rural areas which in turn skewed this percentage. Witt, however, perceiving that "the women are the last ones to be won for Christianity", thought that the home for children could be instrumental in reversing this supposed fact by exercising Christian influence on girls during their formative years. Confirming his belief, a second girl in residence there requested baptism within a few weeks after the institution had opened. Before the end of 1884 Witt led a Zulu chief on a tour of the home and reported joyfully how pleased his guest had been at seeing the seven girls quietly sitting on a mat sewing.[45] Regardless of whether Witt erred in his view that Zulu women were more reluctant to accept Christianity than were their male counterparts, he correctly perceived the importance of female missionaries. The effective presence of Jonatanson at Oscarsberg, who was only the first of several unmarried Swedish women who served the SKM in Natal during his own career in that mission, seems to have deepened his appreciation of their increasingly important role in the field.[46]

Encouragements and Discouragements, 1883-1885

To the extent that one can accept Witt's own testimony as an essentially sincere if not necessarily accurate portrayal of conditions at Oscarsberg, he perceived his work and that of his colleagues at the station as a faithful and at least modestly effective form of missionary endeavour during the first half of the 1880s. This is not to say, however, that there were no setbacks in the SKM field in general or at Witt's station in particular. Even to the extent that his

correspondence and other sources illuminate the work of the SKM amongst the Zulus, there clearly were problems. One can speak of demonstrable progress in that field, but it did not follow a straight line forward. Nor, for that matter, is any other missionary society in the region known to have avoided the problems inherent in bringing vastly different customs and beliefs to a people who often resented what they believed was political and cultural imperialism. The SKM experienced many of the difficulties common to nineteenth-century missionary work, and one can easily draw parallels between some of those tribulations and ones which the Norwegian Lutheran missionaries in Natal and Zululand (to use what may be the most convenient and relevant example) were experiencing. Witt, after Flygare's death in 1883 the most experienced Swedish missionary in Southern Africa, stood at the centre of several encouraging and discouraging incidents which made deep marks on the history of the SKM. He summarised his experiences by declaring that "missionary life is a life full of alternating joys and sorrows, perhaps more obviously than in any other area of life".[47] A few illustrations of various kinds will underscore the point.

The school at Oscarsberg provides an incisive example of a situation in which Witt found that his gratification was limited. In 1883 he still seemed enthusiastic about the educational facet of his ministry. At that time he had twelve pupils, and he combined secular with religious instruction by focusing on Luther's *Small Catechism* and the New Testament in addition to geography and other subjects. Indeed, Witt was pleased to report that his pupils could recite the first two main parts of the *Small Catechism* (presumably those dealing with the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed). On the other hand, he found it frustrating that several of the pupils were slow learners and that in order to maintain coherence in the class he consequently had to prevent the others from forging ahead.[48]

Human frailties occasionally caused Witt sorrow in his specifically religious work. One such case involved a middle-aged woman who was married to a chief who had more than twenty other wives. She requested baptismal instruction at Oscarsberg, something which Witt was happy to give her. At the same time a young Zulu man made a similar request. Someone informed Witt, however, that these two catechumens "stood in an impermissible relationship with each other",

as he euphemistically put it. When he confronted them with this rumour, they openly confessed but insisted that they were not about to separate. Witt gave them a week to repent and change their ways, but they refused to do so. "I therefore reported the matter to the local magistrate", he reported, "who imprisoned both of them, the woman for fourteen days and the boy for three months". The Swede hoped that this punishment might change their hearts, but he was disappointed. The magistrate, whom he described as "a great enemy of all missionary activity", told the woman that if she wished to marry her lover, he would help her obtain a divorce from her polygamous husband. This infuriated Witt. "Is it a wonder that she again abandoned her thought of converting?" he asked. "This is another example of how our so-called Christian authorities undermine us missionaries".[49]

The death of Flygare in February 1883 also caused Witt consternation and was a blow to the understaffed SKM. By that time these two men, who had become bitter enemies during the Anglo-Zulu War, had apparently become sincerely reconciled. Several weeks before his death, Flygare had visited Witt at Oscarsberg and shared with him his worries about financial and other matters. Upon learning that their colleague had died of a respiratory ailment after nearly drowning in a river, Witt and Fristedt tried to ride to the Aangelegen station to console and care for his family, but had to turn back because the Tugela was in flood. The loss of Flygare and the consequent uncertainty of the future of the large farm and station which he had managed probably weighed heavily on Witt, particularly because he then envisaged the continuing expansion of the SKM's field in Southern Africa, albeit primarily in Zululand.[50] The SKM gave up Aangelegen shortly after Flygare's death because it did not have an experienced, Zulu-speaking missionary who could take over that station.

Another matter which gave at most only partial satisfaction to Witt during this period was the resolution of the SKM's claim for damages to its property during the Anglo-Zulu War. In 1882 he could inform Archbishop Sundberg that a settlement seemed imminent, although the amount of compensation would not cover all the losses the SKM had incurred at Oscarsberg. Witt had recently broached the matter in a conversation with Governor Henry Bulwer. The

governor agreed that compensation was in order but suggested that it had not been forthcoming because the SKM had claimed too much. Bulwer believed, for example, that the original manse at Oscarsberg had not been worth more than half of the £800 which the SKM had demanded for its loss. Witt therefore thought it realistic to revise his claim and ask for £950 to cover the destruction of the buildings at the station, the loss of its livestock and crops, and other damages incurred.[51]

On the other hand, Witt's dream of establishing a small Swedish settlement at Oscarsberg succumbed in 1882. One of the causes of its death was that the carpenter who had accompanied him from Sweden two years earlier, a bachelor named Andersson who was engaged to a woman in his native land, seduced Witt's maid and then fled with her. Clearly disillusioned by this misconduct, Witt suggested that the funds which the leadership of the SKM had designated for sending Andersson's fiancée to Natal be used instead for the passage of a new maid from Sweden.[52] This request, however, was not fulfilled.

Witt undoubtedly found some gratification in seeing the fruits of his and his colleagues' labours after a few years in Natal. Quantitatively there were not many; in that respect the SKM could not boast of having been more effective than most of the other missionary societies in the region. By 1884 the nucleus of a congregation existed at Oscarsberg, however, with eleven white and ten black members. Most of the former were in Witt's family or that of a missionary who had joined him in 1883. The ten Zulus were a small fraction of the approximately ninety who resided on the Swedish property there. Witt had baptised two adults and eight children between 1878 and 1882. At the Amoibie outstation, Fristedt had not yet formed any kind of structured congregation, although he held weekly services in his manse. He reported in 1884 that in general between twenty and fifty people attended them. The small number of children at Amoibie had made it infeasible to establish a school for them, but Fristedt was giving instruction to adults in the evenings, a task which the impermanence of the population there made educating them seem to be a "labour of Sisyphus".[53] The loss of the Aangelegen station was unquestionably a blow to Witt and the SKM in general, but between 1880 and 1882 Flygare had baptised three adults

and eight infants there, and twenty-one of the approximately 300 Zulus who resided on the extensive property belonged to the station's congregation.[54]

In retrospect it seems significant that even during the six months immediately preceding the spiritual crisis which Witt went through in mid-1885 he gave the leaders of the SKM several examples of spiritual development at and near Oscarsberg. Two men from his small congregation, one of whom had previously quit receiving baptismal instruction, were spending Sunday afternoons visiting kraals in the vicinity "to convey to their brethren truths which they had derived from my sermon". Witt believed, moreover, that he would soon be able to baptise three girls from the children's home who had professed faith in Christ. During the Lenten season in 1885 he gathered Zulus on Wednesday evenings for prayer and discussion of the significance of Easter. On those occasions Witt also sought to enhance spiritual development by reading excerpts from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* which he had translated into Zulu. Apart from his work at Oscarsberg, the indefatigable Swede continued to engage in itinerant evangelism in the vicinity, although it is impossible to determine how often he did so. He reported that despite massive indifference to the Gospel, in general he was hospitably received at kraals.[55]

By 1885 Witt had become very concerned about his wife's health. She had given birth to a child almost every year since arriving in Natal in 1876. The establishment of the children's home the previous year and the rapid rise in the number of girls at it - despite the absence of a proper building for that institution - placed another heavy burden on her. Under the stress, Mrs Witt began to suffer as many as a dozen fainting spells a day. Justifiably alarmed, her husband brought a British military doctor to Oscarsberg to examine her. This physician found her condition "extremely grave" and declared that only complete rest could save her life. Witt consequently took her to Dalzell's Gordon Memorial station for three weeks. During her stay there, he wrote to the leaders of the SKM and pleaded that a teacher for his children be sent from Sweden. Such a tutor was quite necessary, he argued, because he was unwilling to place his children into the mission school together with young Zulus. The level of education in that basic institution, Witt pointed out, was still simply too low for them. Moreover,

he touched again on a theme by indicating that he and his wife were not willing to allow their children to have such close contact with the blacks.[56] No such help was immediately forthcoming, however.

The Search for a Site in Zululand

In 1882 the SKM bolstered its personnel in Natal by commissioning a relatively young pastor, J. Fredrik Ljungquist (1847-1926), to that field. Witt initially did not know where the Ljungquists would stay while acquiring a knowledge of Zulu and becoming familiar with both missionary work and indigenous culture. It appeared nearly impossible to accommodate them comfortably at Oscarsberg, where a number of young Zulu girls were living in the guest rooms of the manse, and Witt believed that the relatively small number of Zulus at Amoibie militated against acquisition of the language at that out-station. There seemed to be little prospect, therefore, that Ljungquist would have a suitable opportunity to acquire linguistic skills at the latter place.[57] When the Ljungquists arrived at Oscarsberg in June 1883, Witt was compelled to arrange a marginally satisfactory living space for them in an out-building near the Buffalo River. During their stay of more than a year at his station, Witt tutored them in Zulu, a task which he did not seem willing to entrust to Fristedt.

Not until 1884 did conditions in Zululand seem auspicious for giving detailed consideration to the possibility of establishing an SKM station there. Witt had broached the matter repeatedly to the steering committee earlier in the decade, but in 1883 he did so painfully aware that political instability across the Buffalo River made it virtually impossible in the short term. In brief, the British allowed Cetshwayo, whom they had captured at the end of the Anglo-Zulu War, to return to Zululand in January 1883. His position there was precarious, however, partly because one of his old rivals, Zibhebhu (1841?-1904), ruled over one of the thirteen chiefdoms which had resulted from Wolseley's settlement of 1879. Within weeks a violent power struggle had broken out between their respective factions. Cetshwayo suffered major defeats in 1883 and died in February of the

following year. One of his sons, Dinuzulu (1868?-1913), continued the sporadic war with the support of some Transvalers in the Blood River area and defeated Zibhebhu in June 1884. This led to the creation of the so-called "New Republic" that year, which lasted only until the South African Republic absorbed it in 1887.

After Ljungquist had been in Natal for nearly a year, he and Witt undertook a lengthy exploratory journey into Zululand to investigate the possibility of establishing a station there. Setting out from Oscarsberg on 4 March 1884, before the end of the fighting in Zululand, they first called at the Anglican station at Isandhlwana before continuing to several Norwegian stations at Ekombe, Eshowe, Ntumeni, and elsewhere in the defeated kingdom and eventually reaching the Indian Ocean coast near the mouth of the Tugela. From there the two Swedes turned south, re-entered Natal, and visited the Schreuder Mission station at Untunjambili, the Norwegian Missionary Society station at Umpumulo, at least two Hermannsburg stations, and Dalzell's Gordon Memorial station east of Oscarsberg before completing their circuit.

During nearly two weeks in Zululand, Witt and Ljungquist failed to secure a site for a station, but Witt gained a number of new impulses which seem to have had at least minor and indirect consequences for his work. His observations of other missionary endeavours, are therefore significant. They also shed light on Witt's values as a missionary. The Norwegian station at Eshowe, where ageing Ommund Oftebro still laboured after more than three decades amongst the Zulus, especially impressed him. Witt noted that physically the station had been destroyed during the recent war but took joy in the fact that congregational life there had risen from the dead during the early 1880s. He found it especially encouraging that in 1881 the Norwegian Missionary Society had begun to educate Zulu catechists at Eshowe, an endeavour which, however, was to end temporarily in 1885. The SKM, whose stations did not yet even have full-fledged congregations, lagged far behind in this respect and did not have a single indigenous catechist during the first half of the 1880s. Less heartening was the presence of a British garrison near Eshowe. The British Resident of occupied Zululand also maintained his headquarters in the vicinity. Ljungquist and Witt visited him and asked directly for permission to establish a mission station north

of the Tugela. They did not receive an answer, however, because the British official claimed that he did not have jurisdiction over such matters. Witt was incensed. "He unconscionably allows traders to enter and sell liquor and other alcoholic beverages, but those who proclaim the Word of God are excluded", fumed the Swede, echoing a familiar complaint. Continuing his lament, Witt also found it incomprehensible that in Natal missionaries were not permitted to establish stations on "locations" which had been set apart for indigenous inhabitation.

Umpumulo also struck Witt as being a model station. Surrounded by Zulu locations, it was almost ideally suited for evangelisation. Witt noted with appreciation that Hans Leisegang had no fewer than twenty-three adult candidates for baptism there, a number which dwarfed that at Oscarsberg. He also visited Braatvedt's school for Norwegian missionary children and found both that teacher and the building in which he taught, which had been sent out from Norway as prefabricated wooden segments, highly impressive.[58]

Although Witt returned to Oscarsberg empty-handed, he by no means abandoned his vision of extending the SKM's field from Natal into Zululand. The difficulty of doing so must have frustrated him enormously. "With one voice all the missionaries in Zululand proper testify that the receptivity [to the Gospel] there is now much greater than it was before the war", he wrote wistfully later in 1884, "but how can anything be accomplished so long as England's unfortunate policy there keeps the people in constant turmoil?" Witt hoped that the eventual return of tranquility to Zululand would finally allow the SKM to establish a station there.[59]

Building Plans at Oscarsberg

With the door to expansion of the SKM into Zululand still indefinitely closed, Witt resigned himself in 1884 to remaining at Oscarsberg for the foreseeable future and developing the programme of missionary endeavours there. He does not appear to have been particularly disappointed with this state of affairs. Witt did, however, perceive a critical need for expanding the physical facilities at the

station before missionary work could be extended. At that time the buildings there consisted of the chapel, the manse, the schoolhouse, a carriage-house, and a small shed in which various provisions were stored. When the number of girls at the children's home reached a dozen early in 1885, Oscarsberg was virtually filled to capacity. Only a guest room remained in the manse, and Witt thought it necessary to keep it free for guests who visited the station relatively frequently, as there was no inn within twenty kilometres. Ida Jonatanson, the matron of the children's home, then occupied a room in the carriage-house, but Witt bluntly described her quarters as "cold and draughty". He considered moving her to the small house near the Buffalo River which the Ljungquists were expected to vacate soon but feared that she would be vulnerable to sexual assault there. The school seemed inadequate for educational purposes, especially in winter. In a letter to the steering committee of the SKM in which he listed these woes, Witt mentioned that during the winter of 1884 he had been able to teach the children for an average of only thirty minutes a day because the temperature indoors rarely climbed above 6 Celsius.

As one step towards the rectification of this constricted state of the physical plant, Witt proposed the erection of another building which would serve primarily as the children's home. In the budget which he presented to the steering committee of the SKM in January 1885, he estimated that such a structure would cost approximately £115. The largest part of this would be the manufacturing of 33 000 bricks, which Witt believed would cost £25.[60] The committee agreed in March that Witt could begin work on a new building, but it designated only £60 for that purpose. The remainder would have to be raised from the station's own income.[61] Witt thereupon began to arrange the construction of the building.

Conclusion

To observers of Scandinavian foreign missions, it must have seen evident that by 1885 the SKM had taken firm root in the landscape of northern Natal and

was perhaps on the verge of bearing fruit there. To be sure, there was still no certainty that the original vision of expanding into Zululand would soon be realised. Nevertheless, modest growth in the number of converts, pupils, and girls at the children's home, the physical facilities at a rising number of stations, an increase in the number of personnel, and other factors pointed to an arguably bright future. Witt, the *de facto* head of the SKM in Southern Africa in the absence of an official superintendent, unquestionably deserved much of the credit for this advance. Owing partly to his perseverance, willingness to enter into reconciliation with Flygare and Fristedt, and vision of missionary expansion, the SKM's field in Natal had recovered fairly quickly after the devastation of the Anglo-Zulu War had nearly killed it in infancy, and it was striding towards maturation. The first five years of the 1880s were thus a crucial quinquennium in the history of this missionary endeavour. That fact, together with the central role he had played in it, make it surprising at first glance that when Witt wrote his memoirs some forty years later he devoted only two paragraphs to this period. Moreover, that extremely sketchy treatment reveals practically nothing about the history of the SKM's field in which he worked. Instead, as will be seen in the next chapter, Witt used the opportunity to denigrate that phase of his missionary work, presumably to sharpen the contrast between it and the period 1885-1889, immediately following the spiritual crisis which profoundly changed his life, approach to missionary work, and theology. He did little more than mention that he had managed to gather a very small congregation by teaching Zulus at Oscarsberg and baptising those who wished to convert to Christianity.[62] Witt hardly did himself justice in this retrospective and transparently tendentious treatment.

Two relevant facts about Witt himself during the first half of the 1880s emerge from a detailed consideration of the evidence. First, there is no reason to believe that he seriously doubted the validity of his Lutheran heritage at that time. He does not appear to have had a great deal of contact with Christians of other traditions, although he knew the Scottish Free Churchman James Dalzell fairly well and occasionally commented disparagingly about John Colenso and other Anglicans. The most frequent visitors to Oscarsberg, however, appear to

have been either Norwegian or German Lutherans. Witt occasionally requested the steering committee of the SKM to send him Swedish theological works, but they would not have led him in a non-Lutheran direction. In his correspondence he did not broach doctrinal matters before 1885, and his library has not survived, so it is impossible to know precisely what he read that might have caused him to set a different course. On the contrary, like most other Lutheran missionaries, he continued to use Luther's *Small Catechism* as a central part of the foundation of the religious instruction which he gave at Oscarsberg. Prior to mid-1885, there is no trace of the Biblical literalism, millenarianism, and other elements of theological divergence which set him in a different direction shortly after his spiritual crisis and eventually left a deep imprint on his missionary activity.

Secondly, Witt's attitudes towards the indigenous peoples whom he was evangelising and teaching deserves consideration. In Chapter II it was pointed out that en route to Natal he made disparaging remarks about certain non-European peoples. At Oscarsberg, however, Witt seems to have become more tolerant. Admittedly, he did not often record valuative remarks about general Zulu characteristics, but when he did they were at least partly positive. This was certainly the case by 1885. In April of that year he wrote that "despite all the faults of the Zulus and their resistance to the Gospel, one finds in them much that is good and honourable which arouses our sympathy". Apart from the hospitality which had often been extended to him in kraals, however, Witt did not specify what these positive traits were.[63] On the other hand, he did not catalogue what he perceived as their negative traits, as many other nineteenth and early twentieth-century missionaries in Natal and Zululand did. Apart from his unwillingness to allow his children to spend a great deal of time with their African counterparts, there is no reason to believe that Witt was a blatant racist. Fristedt, by contrast, was arguably precisely that, at least during the 1880s. In 1884 he declared that the people of Africa bore the curse of Ham (an allusion to Genesis 9:25) and adduced the alleged sexual immorality of the Zulus to substantiate that claim. Fristedt believed that even Zulu women were generally morally depraved in this respect. "In their unsatisfied lust", he wrote luridly, "the women often attract not only their compatriots but also foreign men. There are

many pitiful examples of this among the Europeans here, especially the English". Why this was not equally evidence of European male depravity he did not explain. Fristedt believed that the enslavement of many Africans abroad had been a direct punishment for sexual sins. Within Zulu society, he found the enslavement of the female sex in polygamy to be another result of the curse of Ham, one which the women, to his amazement, not only accepted but vociferously defended. This, he asserted, further hindered evangelisation. Zulu women, their sexual desires not satisfied, "turn a deaf ear to the proclamation of grace and freedom in Christ".[64] Fristedt's racist prejudices were not restricted to Africans. Like most other European Natalians, he loathed the Indian population of that colony. In his memoirs, Fristedt made deprecating remarks about the Trappists at Mariannhill and declared that "more dangerous than the Catholics, however, are the yellow people who emigrate in increasing numbers from India and China to South Africa". He accused these Asians of working for low wages and introducing unspecified "abominations" to the country.[65]

Notes

1. Otto Witt (Spanish Sea) to *Missions-Tidning*, 20 June 1880, in *Missions-Tidning*, V, no. 7 (1880), pp. 157-159.

2. *The Natal Mercury* (Durban), 16 July 1880.

3. *The Natal Mercury*, 16 July 1880.

4. F.L. Fristedt (Durban) to *The Natal Mercury*, 19 July 1880, in *The Natal Mercury*, 19 July 1880.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to unspecified recipient, 23 August 1880, in *Missions-Tidning*, V, no. 11 (1880), pp. 254-255.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 12 November 1880.

9. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelse Protokoll 1874-1883*, Carl Tornérhielm (Stockholm) to C.L. Flygare, 21 December 1880.

10. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 19 April 1881, in *Missions-Tidning*, VI, no. 6 (1881), pp. 125-126.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

14. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 1 August 1881.

15. Archives of the Norwegian Missionary Society, box 135A, file 6, C. Oftebro (Eshowe) to Norwegian Missionary Society, 24 August 1880.

16. *Fædrelandet* (Kristiania), 31 December 1880 (letter).

17. Olav Guttorm Myklebust, *Det Norske Misjonsselskaps historie. Sör-Afrika* (Stavanger, Det Norske Misjonsselskap, 1949), p. 89.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 21 October 1881.

20. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Anton Sundberg, 28 September 1882.

21. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 6 July 1882.

22. Nils Braatvedt (Umpumulo Mission Station) to Norwegian Missionary Society, undated, in *Norsk Missionstidende*, XLI, no. 5 (March 1886), p. 96.

23. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Anton Sundberg, 16 November 1881.

24. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 26 December 1881, in *Missions-Tidning*, VII, no. 4 (1882), pp. 67-69.

25. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 26 December 1881.

26. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 6 July 1881.

27. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Anton Sundberg, 28 September 1882.

28. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station), "Öfversigt öfver min verksamhet i Svenska Kyrkans Missions tjänst", 7 April 1883.

29. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 18 April 1885, in *Missions-Tidning*, X, no. 6 (1885), pp. 150-151.

30. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, F.L. Fristedt, Otto Witt, and C.L. Flygare (Aangelegen Mission Station) to SKM Mission Station, 27 June 1881.

31. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, C.L. Flygare and F.L. Fristedt (Aangelegen Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 30 June 1881.

32. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 1, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelse Protokoll 1874-1883*, Carl Tornérhielm (Stockholm) to F.L. Fristedt, 27 October 1880.

33. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 12 November 1880.

34. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 1 August 1881.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Otto Witt (Amoibie Mission Station) to unspecified recipient, 5 September 1881, in *Missions-Tidning*, VI, no. 11 (1881), p. 244.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Carl Ludvig Flygare (Aangelegen Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, VI, no. 6 (1881), pp. 121-122.

39. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 2, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1880-1883*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Anton Sundberg, 19 March 1883.

40. Witt, "Öfversigt öfver min verksamhet i Svenska Kyrkans Missions tjenst".

41. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 2, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelse Protokoll 1884-1893*, 18 April 1884.

42. Ida Jonatanson (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 20 September 1884, in *Missions-Tidning*, IX, no. 11 (1884), pp. 257-258.

43. Ida Jonatanson (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Axel Sundberg, 20 November 1884, in *Missions-Tidning*, X, no. 1 (1885), pp. 8-9.

44. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to unspecified recipient, 6 October 1885, in *Missions-Tidning*, IX, no. 12 (1884), pp. 269-270.

45. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to unspecified recipient, 15 November 1884, in *Missions-Tidning*, X, no. 1 (1885), pp. 7-8.

46. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 3 December 1884, in *Missions-Tidning*, X, no. 2 (1885); pp. 37-39.

47. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to unspecified recipient, 28 February 1883, in *Missions-Tidning*, VIII, no. 6 (1883), p. 135.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

51. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Anton Sundberg), 28 September, 1882.

52. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 6 July 1882.

53. F.L. Fristedt (Amoibie Mission Station) to unspecified recipient, 26 January 1884, in *Missions-Tidning*, IX, no. 4 (1884), pp. 76-77.

54. "Fyrationdeåttonde årets Berättelse och Redowisning af Swenska Missionssällskapets Direktion. 1883", *Missions-Tidning*, IX, no. 7 (1884), p. 158.

55. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 18 April 1885, pp. 150-153.

56. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 3, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1884-1887*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to unspecified recipient, 30 May 1885.

57. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Anton Sundberg, 28 September 1882.

58. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 20 March 1884, in *Missions-Tidning*, IX, no. 6 (1884), pp. 128-136.

59. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 3 December 1884.

60. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 3, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1884-1886*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 30 January 1885.

61. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 2, *Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1884-1893*, 12 March 1883.

62. Witt, *Märkliga livserfarenheter*, pp. 25-26.

63. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 18 April 1885, p. 151.

64. F.L. Fristedt (Amoibie Mission Station) to *Missions-Tidning*, 26 January 1884, pp. 75-76.

65. F.L. Fristedt, *Tjugofem år i Sydafrika. Minnen och erfarenheter* (Lund, Håkan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1905), p. 328.

CHAPTER V

WITT'S SPIRITUAL CRISIS AND ITS IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

Introduction

In 1885 Otto Witt underwent a profound spiritual crisis which eventually had far-reaching consequences for his theology, missionary practice, and personality. It soon made a perceptible mark on the SKM's work in Natal, and although it set Witt on a different road in his spiritual odyssey, it did not steer his colleagues in directions other than those they had been following. The SKM managed to weather his crisis by the end of the 1880s and continued to expand its field along lines which had been drawn earlier but which soon extended into Zululand. Witt's personal new direction was thus a consequential chapter in the history of Swedish Lutheran missions to the Zulus, but the greatest consequences were for Witt's own ministry, which became more individual and eventually led to his departure from the SKM. The historical significance of his crisis must therefore be examined principally in relationship to him.

It should be emphasised that there is no firm evidence of anything specific which foreshadowed the transformation of Witt's spirituality in 1885. Admittedly, evidence pertaining to his spirituality is sparse for the preceding years. He had not yet written his first book, and his extensive correspondence with the steering committee of the SKM sheds little light on the matter. Nevertheless, a few observations seem safe. First, apart from assertions which he made in his unreliable memoirs, there is no compelling reason to believe that Witt seriously questioned the fundamental tenets of his birthright Lutheran tradition before 1885, though of course he may have done so without recording his doubts. In any case, he frequently referred to his use of Luther's *Small Catechism* when imparting the Christian doctrines to both Zulu children and adults at Oscarsberg. His theological education had been typical and undistinguished at the University of Lund. Secondly, at times Witt had been more willing to pass judgement on people, including his colleagues Flygare and Fristedt, than to be conciliatory, although the three men eventually settled their differences and

by 1885 the former was dead and the latter had been co-operating with Witt for at least two years. Thirdly, Witt had seen his work bear several fruits at Oscarsberg since returning in 1880. There was a very small but growing congregation of baptised Christians at the station, and other converts were preparing for baptism. Witt's school attracted Zulu children, and he had succeeded in attracting some adults to special evening devotions. The children's home for girls was expanding rapidly, and the SKM had approved the construction of a separate building to accommodate it. In Ida Jonatanson Witt had a devoted and hard-working colleague. Compared to the tribulations which Norwegian Lutheran missionaries had endured in establishing stations and gathering congregations in both Natal and Zululand prior to 1880, Witt had been an effective missionary at Oscarsberg. On the other hand, he appears to have been a somewhat impatient person, and circumstances stemming from unrest in Zululand had frustrated his plans of establishing an SKM station on the other side of the Buffalo River. In brief, it may well have been that in the mid-1880s Witt's hopes and expectations as a missionary had not yet been fulfilled.

The Crisis as Witt Described It Subsequently

Unfortunately, the only direct source of information for Witt's spiritual crisis is the autobiography which he wrote in the early 1920s. That document is largely a tendentious *apologia* in which he defended the tortuous spiritual path he had followed, one which had led him away from his Lutheran heritage and eventually brought him to Pentecostalism. In the absence of other evidence, we are compelled to rely on his own retrospective testimony, which of course must be read critically.

Witt began his account of the matter by portraying his ministry and spiritual condition on the eve of his crisis in moderately disparaging terms. This may have been sincere from the perspective of the 1920s. On the other hand, it may have been a rhetorical device, part of his efforts to justify his decision to follow a different course after 1885. In any case, Witt declared with slight exaggeration that by the time of his crisis he had toiled for seven years at Oscarsberg. In fact, he had established that station seven years prior to his crisis but had spent a year and a half away from

it in 1879 and 1880. Witt did not depict his ministry as having been entirely futile. "I had a small group of Christians whom I had led into the evangelical Lutheran church in the usual manner, i.e. through instruction and sprinkling", he conceded. He also mentioned that many of the "heathens" in the area had been willing to send their children to the station for instruction. Witt emphasised that the children's home was a special point of light at the station, an institution at which the girls were taught "not merely knowledge from books but also better customs than what they saw in their heathen homes".[1]

Witt praised Ida Jonatanson, the teacher and matron at the children's home, as a woman who "had in her heart experienced the power of the new birth's grace".[2] His lauding of her spirituality is understandable, because it was her testimony which triggered his crisis. Witt described the incident in detail. In a conversation which she had with him in June 1885, Jonatanson had begun to relate how she had found spiritual peace. At an otherwise unidentified revival meeting in Sweden, the preacher had proclaimed that if anyone desired to accept the atonement for his or her sins which God had offered as satisfaction for all godlessness, namely the blood of Jesus, "such a soul could be completely saved at once". Jonatanson had thanked God for providing this simple way of salvation, and, in Witt's words, "at the very moment when she believed in the blood, peace came to her heart, and she rejoiced at entering the Kingdom of God". The young Swedish woman's simple testimony struck a chord with Witt, who professed nearly four decades later that in 1885 he had been seeking for several years to enter the "kingdom of peace" through missionary work. His efforts had come to naught, however, leaving him in a state of virtual despair. Jonatanson's evangelical message, though, which was arguably in closer harmony with the central Lutheran tenet of passive righteousness and justification by faith alone than was Witt's approach of seeking God's peace through missionary endeavour, seemed to fit his spiritual longing. "Now there suddenly appeared to me a prospect of having all my old sins expunged by free grace and being allowed to begin afresh under new conditions", he recalled. Witt admitted, however, that he lacked the courage to fulfil what he regarded as a precondition to receiving this grace by humbling himself and openly confessing his sins. During a sleepless night he experienced what he obliquely called a "fearful struggle" because of this, and decided to relate

to Jonatanson as much of his personal history as he could "without compromising myself too much". The following day he began to do so but initially was reserved, emphasising in general terms "how God had influenced me and spoken to my heart at various times of my life". Having begun the process, though, Witt continued to pour out his soul to his female confessor. "Full of shame and modesty, I admitted that even though I was a minister of the Gospel I had not been saved and indeed could not be, because like a hypocrite I spoke words which I did not believe", he wrote. Witt thereupon broke down in tears. Jonatanson consoled her sobbing colleague by saying that even hypocrites could convert and be saved and that she had known a pastor in Sweden who had "given himself to God" only after having served in a church for several years.[3]

If Witt's account of that incident is reasonably accurate, one of the first changes which his spiritual crisis brought about was in his concept of salvation. Granted that the evidence of the crisis is thin and circumstantial, it nevertheless causes one to wonder whether both Jonatanson and Witt had been influenced by the general neo-pietistic tendencies which characterised much Swedish Lutheran theology and church life during the nineteenth century. Among other things, he had laid great emphasis on the subjective elements of the pietistic *ordo salutis*, such as awakening and conversion. When Witt mentioned this matter to Jonatanson, she had protested that "God accepts the sinner as he is, and precisely at that point lifts him up from the depths of sin and places him on the solid rock". In other words, where Witt, possibly speaking from a pietistic heritage which had emphasised sanctification as the primary element of salvation, Jonatanson, perhaps reflecting a more orthodox Lutheran background, stressed justification. Witt countered that he had frequently sought to confess his sins, but that they had seemed too numerous to be forgiven. Again Jonatanson assured him that forgiveness was divine, and that for God no number of transgressions were too great, provided they were confessed. "These blessed words released me from a predicament", recalled Witt. "My difficulties concerning the way of salvation were taken away in an instant, and I realised that it was not a question of enumerating the sins I had committed, but rather of simply confessing that I was fallen, lost, and needed to be saved". Witt consequently requested Jonatanson, whom he referred to as an "instrument of the Lord", to pray for him. The two

missionaries then dropped to their knees, and Jonatanson intercessorily prayed for forgiveness and salvation for Witt. He, however, was unable to pray and could only cry. When the two rose to their feet, Witt asked Jonatanson whether he was then saved. She replied that he should not believe in his salvation, but rather in God's promise of salvation by grace alone. The latter half of her advice was less obvious to Witt than it may seem. He prayed repeatedly but, as he wrote later, he found it difficult to profess such belief. In his autobiography, he rationalised this spiritual obstacle by reasoning that "God was too merciful to allow me to believe in a false peace which would not last long, because he wished to lead me to the firm ground of his Word, which cannot tremble". Witt's own trembling continued for more than a week. When he turned to Jonatanson in his spiritual need, she counselled him simply to continue to believe in God and to turn to the love of God. Witt's struggle proved exhausting. "All of my supports were taken away from me", he wrote metaphorically, "repentance, improvement, tears, pastoral office, call to missionary work - I had to leave them all. I stood as if on the brink of an enormous precipice looking down into the void". Witt had not lost all hope, however, for he believed that God was telling him to cast himself into God's arms. "God said that if I would throw myself down, he would embrace me in his eternal arms. I had no choice. I threw myself helplessly upon the unmerited grace. I cried out to God to save me from disappearing. Like a child, I then fell asleep".[4]

Witt's most intensive night of spiritual *Anfechtung* thus ended, but his immediate confrontation with deity had just begun. When he woke up the following day, 17 June 1885, he experienced what was probably the most profound vision of his life. "Heaven opened itself to me and I heard a voice whose liveliness moved the innermost depths of my being", Witt recalled. The spiritually shaken Swede expressed no uncertainty about the identity of what he saw: "It was Jesus himself, who repeated the words which he once had spoken to his disciples, 'you did not choose me, but I chose you. . .'". Hearing this pronouncement from John 15:16 exalted Witt and gave him the peace and assurance of salvation which he had sought. "Every fibre in my being vibrated at these words, . . . I saw myself chosen in Jesus before the beginning of time, and I understood that I was secure, eternally secure, for the life of Christ had been born in my soul".[5]

Placed into the mainline of the orthodox Lutheran tradition, Witt's crisis seems highly plausible but arguably unnecessary. Since the time of the Reformation, Lutheran theologians had placed great emphasis on the assurance of salvation, i.e. the confidence that in spite of sin the Christian is no longer under the wrath of God and not proceeding towards eternal damnation because of the God's gracious mercy through the Atonement of Christ. Although none of the twenty-eight articles of the *Augsburg Confession* was devoted specifically to assurance, this emphasis was as constant as the divine mercy which it propounded. The first Lutheran to stress it was none less than Martin Luther (1483-1547). Despite his frequent *Anfechtungen*, he, like many of his theologically educated followers in the German principalities and Scandinavia, had relied heavily on Romans 5 and 8 as well as various other Biblical texts to teach assurance, a concept which the Council of Trent declared heretical. Luther developed this theme many times, perhaps nowhere more clearly than when explicating John 15:4. "Wherever there is such faith and assurance of grace in Christ, you can also confidently conclude with regard to your vocation and works that these are pleasing to God and are true and good Christian fruits", he insisted. Luther sought vigorously to counteract suspicions on the part of individual believers that they could not be confident that God was consistently extending his grace to them, and he believed it was essential that both clergymen and lay people refuse to question the constancy of God in this regard. "He who wants to be a Christian pastor or a believing Christian must teach and profess the opposite and say: 'I know that I have a gracious God and that my life is pleasing to Him'". To Luther the primary theological principle at stake in this was not Christian piety but the nature of God. He assumed on the basis on the Old Testament as well as the New that divinity was not arbitrary but constantly gracious. On the other hand, Luther was keenly aware of the sinful and wavering nature of mankind. His view of the latter was in many respects pessimistic, but this only confirmed rather than beclouded his conviction that salvation came from above and that Christians could do little more than accept it. The task of the believer in this regard was quite simply to continue to believe. Himself no stranger to the grape, Luther built on a favourite Johannine metaphor to illustrate the point:

> And if I thus remain in Christ, then it is certain that for His sake my vocation, my life, and my works are also acceptable to God and are precious fruits in His sight. And though I myself am still weak in the faith, and though many frailties and sinful lusts still dwell within me and always manifest themselves, this will not be reckoned against me but will be forgiven, provided I do not yield to them, give them free rein, or let myself be torn from the Vine. For as long as the branch is rooted in the stem or the stock and retains its sap and strength, its fruits must also be and remain good, although here and there it may be punctured by worms or infested with caterpillars and other vermin. Likewise, as long as man remains in Christ and receives and retains sap and strength from Him through faith - Christ works in him with His power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit - the weakness still inherent in him and incited by the devil and his evil nature cannot harm him.[6]

In short, to Luther, and to most subsequent orthodox Lutheran theology (and, for that matter, even in the view of some pietists), the assurance of salvation is completely independent of the shifts of mood in the believer.

Had Witt turned to the works of Luther while on the mission field, and there is no evidence that he did, he may have averted his spiritual crisis entirely. Instead, he deviated, probably unconsciously, from this highly important dimension of his Lutheran heritage and in effect subordinated both his assurance of salvation and his confidence in his own ministry to his feelings. When they soared, so did his assurance of salvation. When they plummeted, his assurance dwindled.

It seems plausible that Witt's crisis reflected some influence, possibly indirect, of understanding of the assurance of salvation in Schartauan tradition, although there is no direct or unambiguous evidence of this. It would be simplistic to classify Witt, who had been educated in Lutheran confessionalism at Lund but who also embodied other theological emphases, merely as a pietist either before or after his crisis. Yet he may well also have been influenced by the residual pietism in the south-western part of his native land. His spiritual self-doubts and Jonatanson's efforts to assure

him that salvation was his seem to have mirrored two conflicting views then current in Sweden, both of which had many advocates.

In brief, pietism came to Sweden from German Lutheranism, especially Francke's influence at Halle, around the beginning of the eighteenth century. This new current, which many clergymen in the Church of Sweden perceived as a threat to ecclesiastical order, attracted many followers but also antagonised large numbers of conservative detractors. To keep the movement, which found expression *inter alia* in lay conventicles, under control, the Swedish Crown proclaimed in 1727 a Conventicles Edict, which regulated these informal meetings. They continued clandestinely, however, and partly through them pietism continued to shape large sections of the laity until well into the nineteenth century. The movement was never homogenous, however, and soon divided into factions representing differing theological positions.

With specific regard to the central question of the assurance of salvation, two principal directions can be discerned. The elder of these two, which was clearly closer to the ethos of Franckean pietism in Germany, was most closely identified with Henric Schartau. Ordained in 1780, he spent much of his ministry as the city curate in Lund, where his legacy remained strong long after his death. Although affected by Herrnhut sentimentalism early in life, Schartau left that wing of pietism and by 1787 had reacted strongly against it. His subsequent spiritual and theological development were marked by this reaction, and he remained a firmly ecclesiastical clergyman for the rest of his life, stressing the importance of the church as an institution and of correct doctrine. Like many other pietists, Schartau continued to take his spiritual temperature frequently and encouraged his followers to do likewise. As an aid in this process of sanctification, he carefully developed what in Swedish was called a *nådens ordning*, or order of salvation, a step-by-step plan also known by the Latin term *ordo salutis*. Schartau described what he believed was the normal religious development of the individual Christian and encouraged others to conform to that pattern. As scholars of the Schartau legacy have emphasised, one of the chief effects of the emphasis on the influential *ordo salutis* was to undermine the confidence of many Swedes in their salvation by subjecting their assurance to the varying contours of their feelings, despite Schartau's own reaction against Herrnhut sentimentalism.

Rather than the conclusive work of Christ, therefore, the individual believer's self-examination gained centre stage.[7]

In much of south-western Sweden, where Witt was born, raised, and educated, the spirit of Schartau continued to leave its mark on religious life for the rest of the nineteenth century. The man's influence was largely posthumous.[8] Of his approximately 1 700 extant sermons, almost 900 were printed, and for decades they were popular devotional literature amongst Swedish pietists, as were his published letters of spiritual counsel. His catechism was also very widely used. The Diocese of Göteborg was recognised as the bastion of Schartauanism, but it was also present in Witt's original regional ecclesiastical home, the Diocese of Lund. Gottfrid Billing, a non-Schartauan who taught theology at the University of Lund while Witt was a student there and for several years thereafter, and who was consecrated bishop there in 1898, wrote a book about Schartau in 1914 in which he emphasised that the legacy of his subject lived on in that diocese and that it affected many people who had no idea that it did.[9] One wonders whether he may have had in mind some of his erstwhile students who became ordained Schartauan pastors under his supervision in the dioceses of Lund and in the neighbouring diocese of Göteborg. As Henrik Hägglund has pointed out, several men of Witt's generation who studied theology at the University of Lund became known for their Schartauan views.[10] Hagglund's father, Johan Henrik Hägglund (1833-1902), a native of Lund, was a pastor in the cathedral parish of that city for many years, including all those when Witt studied there. As his biographer has pointed out, theology students from the university often attended his worship services, catechetical sessions, and Bible lectures.[11] In other words, not only Lutheran high church confessionalism but also the Schartauan legacy was an influential current to which theology students in Lund were exposed during Witt's years as a student. It cannot be proven that this particular exposure influenced him, but his later testimony that early in his ministry he had very serious questions about his assurance of salvation suggests strongly that either it or some other manifestation of the Schartauan legacy had made an imprint on him.

In contrast to this dominant wing of nineteenth-century Swedish pietism stood *nyevangelism*, or neo-evangelism, a younger school of pietism generally associated with Carl Olof Rosenius. As a child in the remote northern province of Västerbotten,

he was exposed to both legalistic and non-legalistic forms of pietism and at an early age served as a leader of conventicles. Intending to become a pastor in the Church of Sweden, Rosenius undertook theological studies at the University of Uppsala in 1838 but abandoned them a year later after a spiritual crisis. He then came under the influence of George Scott (1804-1874), a Scottish Methodist who had been sent to Stockholm as a missionary. The two men founded a periodical titled *Pietisten* in the Swedish capital in 1842, shortly before Scott was deported on grounds of inciting religious enthusiasm and related public unrest. Rosenius continued to edit the publication, however, which appeared until early in the twentieth century. In its pages he advocated a new kind of piety, one which differed markedly from that which the Schartau-influenced wing of Swedish piety emphasised. In this school, which is generally known as *nyevangelism*, much greater stress was laid upon the atoning work of Christ (which by no means had Schartau neglected) than on the gradual sanctification of believers. In this respect, at least, the Rosenians could claim to be more firmly in the tradition of Martin Luther and orthodox Lutheranism in general than their rivals in the older pietistic movement. Strictly speaking, according to the neo-evangelists, a Christian's behaviour did not require improvement in order for the person to be a true disciple of Christ. Justification by faith was, in essence, justification by continuing belief. If this was a one-sided approach to the Christian life, it was nevertheless one which many Swedes and other Scandinavians found appealing during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The possible relevance of these sharply conflicting kinds of pietism, especially the differing concepts of the assurance of salvation which they featured, to Witt's spiritual crisis of 1885 is not difficult to comprehend. His account of it suggests that he may have been influenced by the Schartau school, which emphasised gradual assurancne of salvation and constant self-examination. Jonatanson, by contrast, may well have been influenced by neo-evangelism to believe in the immediacy of total salvation by acceptance of the lordship of Jesus Christ, though there is no firm evidence of such influence. In any case, the divergent positions of these two missionaries with regard to assurance are evident, and they are similar to those which pietists of these two schools in Sweden represented.

When Witt overcame his initial spiritual crisis, what may have been an essentially subjective assurance of salvation proved inadequate. It flourished only temporarily, running ahead of the fluctuations in his moods. Consequently, he soon experienced other spiritual problems. Precisely what these were is not known, although they appear to have involved certain *charismata* to some degree. In any case, in his autobiography (which, it should be emphasised, was written after the Pentecostal movement had made a strong impact on him), he admitted that "the more God bestowed his gifts upon me and made me his instrument for spiritual awakenings and [gave me] healing powers, arrogance developed in me, [and I felt] as though I actually were something or God were relying on me". In some unexplained way which he interpreted as a consequence of this, Witt then underwent another spiritual crisis, though one less intense than the previous incident and of a less edifying nature. As he put it graphically, "the light was taken away, the blessed peace gradually disappeared, and one day I clearly felt how God had closed his door to me. I cannot imagine a more gruesome experience". When this decline took place is very difficult to determine, as neither Witt's autobiography nor any of his other writings sheds light on it. Making the task of analysing it in the context of his life and mission even more frustrating is the fact that at this point his autobiographical narrative appears to become confused and exaggerated. Witt declared vaguely that after feeling cut off from God's grace "for several years I was estranged from God and could not pray or read his Word, which had been extraordinarily precious to me. I followed my own path in deep darkness". How this segment of Witt's spiritual odyssey could have lasted for "several years" is incomprehensible, because he placed it between his initial spiritual crisis of 1885 and his brief period of direct exposure to Andrew Murray (1828-1917), the eminent Dutch Reformed pastor from the Cape, in 1887, a subject which will be discussed shortly. This may be merely another example of Witt's carelessness with regard to detail. In any case, in his autobiography Witt insisted that he fought "a struggle of despair" to return to the spiritual heights to which he had been lifted in 1885. His inability to do so, however, left him unable to believe in the love of God. He began to regard God as a "personal enemy", though primarily because he believed he had sinned by falling away from divine grace. Again, however, Witt overcame this crisis, reportedly by turning to Ephesians 4:26

and not allowing the sun to go down on his anger. When this reconciliation between the troubled Swede and his God took place is also unknown. The only chronological benchmark which he provided is his assertion that some time thereafter he gave a testimony about it at a Salvation Army meeting. This may have been in Durban, and if so it probably occurred in the late 1880s, shortly after that organisation began work in Natal. By 1889, when representatives of a pan-Scandinavian missionary organisation called the "Free East Africa Mission" arrived in Durban and began to co-operate with Witt (a highly significant matter which is the topic of Chapter VI), he was again very actively engaged in missionary evangelism and impressed the newcomers to the field with the effectiveness of his preaching.[12]

Witt's Crisis Period Seen from Contemporary Evidence

When one turns to the letters which Witt wrote during the period of his spiritual crisis, one finds a much different and presumably more reliable - if quite incomplete and not necessarily entirely candid - view of this stage of his life. In general, these documents from 1885 testify to an increased emphasis on itinerant evangelism, discouragement with evangelistic tours, and a new interest in the imminent Second Coming of Christ. Moreover, at the same time, Witt was engaged in the selection of the site for another SKM station in Natal. Curiously enough, however, his correspondence from 1885 contains no explicit reference to a spiritual crisis. He appears to have withheld from the steering committee of the SKM the inner turmoil he was then experiencing but which he remembered so vividly decades later. That kind of material, moreover, rarely found its way into the publications of missionary societies, and Witt's letters to *Missions-Tidning* are no exception. Jonatanson also discreetly maintained silence about the matter, at least in her correspondence with the steering committee which has been preserved.

Witt reported to Henry William Tottie (1856-1913), the secretary of the SKM steering committee, in December 1885 that he had changed the emphasis of his missionary strategy. "I find it increasingly clear how utterly necessary it is for us missionaries to visit the black people in their homes and what a great blessing that

can be. Therefore, I have been out amongst the people much more often in recent times", he explained. Witt did not pretend that this was a new element in his ministry; he merely indicated that he was devoting more of his time to an activity in which he had engaged from time to time for several years. Witt described in some detail how he rode from kraal to kraal and proclaimed the Gospel wherever the inhabitants lent him their ears. His account shed very little light, however, on how he evangelised people. It would be highly enlightening to know the extent to which Witt sought to couch the Gospel in terms intended to be particularly comprehensible to the Zulu mind. Unfortunately, we can discern only fragments of that from his correspondence. Witt provided a few examples of how he initiated conversations when he entered kraals. At one, he asked an elderly woman, "Have you heard that you have a father in heaven who wants you to come to him, when your time on earth is over?" She replied that she had heard something to that effect but that she neither knew whether it was true or how she could approach the heavenly father. Perceiving an opening, Witt alluded to John 3:16 and assured the woman that God loved the entire human race, including the Zulu people, so greatly that he had given his son for the salvation of those who believed in him. The hopeful Swede then asked both her and a young man who was standing nearby listening whether they believed that what he said was true. The listener admitted that he did not accept what Witt had said. The woman said nothing.[13]

Such frustrations, which he had experienced since initially arriving in Natal nearly a decade earlier and must have regarded as endemic to missionary life, tempered his enthusiasm. Referring to the above-mentioned efforts at kraal evangelism, Witt wrote that "when I come home from such a preaching tour and ponder how it was and what I had said, from a human viewpoint the day seems to have been wasted". Like other missionaries, however, he found his consolation in the assurance that he was doing the will of God.[14]

What stands out more than anything else in his evangelism in the wake of his spiritual crisis, though, is Witt's emphasis on the imminence of the Second Coming of Christ. The sources of his millenarianism are not known, but in any case various British and American millenarian theologies were beginning to make a significant impact on Scandinavia during the 1880s, and it is plausible that some of those currents

which washed ashore there also reached Oscarsberg. As that decade drew to a close, Witt came into close contact with Scandinavian free church missionaries in Natal (a subject to be discussed in detail in Chapter VII), and some of these men and women propounded futurist millenarianism which well-known evangelists like John Nelson Darby and Dwight Moody had popularised on both sides of the Atlantic. What prompted Witt to begin to emphasise the Second Advent in 1885 (if in fact this new emphasis in his proclamation stemmed from that year, as appears to be the case) is unknown. One possible explanation lies in the minor explosion of Swedish and other Scandinavian millenarian literature during the 1880s, perhaps most notably in this context works by the respected Swedish Lutheran theologian and promoter of missions Peter Fjellstedt and the globe-trotting Swedish-American evangelist Fredrik Franson (1852-1908). Both of these Swedes had published millenarian works in 1881, and it is conceivable that one or more of their books had come into Witt's hands. It is also quite plausible that Witt had read millenarian treatises by British theologians, though again we cannot be certain about the lines of influence.

Millenarianism, it should be emphasised, was not entirely foreign to eschatology in the Lutheran tradition, so it is not necessary to assume that Witt's initial interest in the topic came from non-Lutheran sources, although eventually he unquestionably absorbed nineteenth and early twentieth-century apocalyptic currents that flowed from various sources. Martin Luther believed that Christ might return within his own lifetime, and since 1530 Article III of the Augsburg Confession, echoing the Apostles' Creed, had declared that "the same Lord Christ will return openly to judge the living and the dead". At times Lutheran theologians had gone beyond this general teaching by seeking to interpret prophetic Biblical statements in strictly chronological terms and calculating the approximate date of Christ's Second Advent. Generally speaking, however, in Lutheran theology, including that taught in Sweden during the nineteenth century, the eschatological dimension received much less attention than, for example, the doctrines of sin, justification, and the sacraments.

Witt's millenarian theology blossomed later, especially after 1889. By 1895 it had developed to the point where he could write a book titled *Kristi återkomst och Tusenåriga riket* (i.e. The Return of Christ and the Thousand-year Reign).[15] In 1885 it appears to have been in a very primitive state, and whether and how it was

related to his spiritual crisis is unclear. In any case, he began to stress to the Zulus whom he evangelised the necessity of accepting the Gospel soon because, as he put it, "we do not know when the Lord will come and call us, and if we come before his judgement with our sins still upon us, we will be lost". Statements of this sort may have reflected the doctrine of the "any-moment coming" which futurist millenarians never ceased to proclaim. In themselves, however, they do not constitute anything approaching a full-fledged millenarian theology.[16]

Another emphasis which emerges even more vividly from Witt's contemporary descriptions of his evangelism during 1885 is a more marked willingness to separate the Gospel from the cultural trappings of European civilisation. No more than most of his colleagues in the SKM and counterparts in other missionary societies did he fully succeed in this effort, but in any case one can discern a turning point which proved consequential. Witt seems to have begun to see more clearly that the willingness of some Zulus who had resided at or near mission stations to build houses in what he liberally called a "European style" did not necessarily mean that they had undergone a spiritual transition. In one typical and illustrative incident, Witt visited such a home and discussed Christianity with its inhabitants. To his dismay, one of the men who resided there promised to believe in Christ if Witt would first give him a shirt and trousers, ostensibly because it was impossible to be a Christian without such garb which they apparently regarded as an essential part of the Christian life. The perplexed Swede blamed European missionary strategies for this misunderstanding. "It is difficult to help our black friends to overcome the false notion that clothing makes one a Christian, a notion which unfortunately the Christians themselves imparted, because often the only difference between them and the heathens is their clothing". This misunderstanding prompted Witt to assert that "it is absolutely necessary to preach a free Gospel, preach pure grace through faith and avoid saying 'you must do this or this, you must not do that or that'. Faith must come first, then sanctification".[17] In this insight and the adoption of this attitude may have lain the germ of Witt's increasingly critical attitude towards secular education as part of missionary work, a crucial topic to which we shall turn later in the next chapter.

Witt does not appear to have disclosed much about his crisis and the consequent new direction in his theology and spirituality in 1885 to many people outside the

SKM. He did, however, express quite candidly his views of ecclesiastical missions and what he viewed as their tendency to lose their vigour and become ends in themselves in letters to the Student Missionary Society in Uppsala, an organisation which contributed funds to the work at Oscarsberg. In November 1885, for example, some five months after his most intense bout of spiritual wrestling, Witt confided to the secretary of the SMS that while he still loved the Church of Sweden, "I do not believe in ecclesiastical activity which lacks life or in [unintelligible word] ecclesiastical institutions where they inhibit life and hinder its development". This is hardly the kind of statement which Witt would have made to sponsors had he not perceived a tendency in that direction at Oscarsberg or felt that his own work as a missionary should proceed in a direction which differed from a framework which had been prescribed. He emphasised quite openly that in his view "one must make a distinction between working for the church and working for the Lord Jesus" and admitted that he had followed both paths during his career amongst the Zulus. It is highly plausible that with the latter Witt was referring *inter alia* to his willingness to go beyond structured work at Oscarsberg and engage in itinerant evangelism on both sides of the Buffalo River as opposed to limiting his activities to religious and educational functions at the station. Witt revealed something about his motivation for becoming a missionary when he added that he had made the mistake of "going to the mission field to find Jesus instead of being driven there by gratitude for having found him". Witt expressed his belief that many other missionaries had also committed this error and that in it lay one of the reasons why so much missionary work was fruitless. He assured the SMS that largely because of kraal evangelism his own efforts were bearing more fruit than hitherto had been the case, and that approximately a dozen Zulus whom he had evangelised were on the verge of professing faith in Christ.[18]

A few months later Witt wrote again to the SMS in Uppsala and made a direct appeal for volunteers to join him in the field. "We need help if we are to achieve anything outside the narrow confines which have been given us", he pleaded. "Our Zulus are beginning to hunger. . .". To Witt it seemed essential that the SKM finally penetrate Zululand. He noted that he had initially arrived in Natal nearly a decade earlier and did not conceal his frustration that he had not reached that geographic

goal, at least not in terms of establishing a single station there.[19] Indeed, one suspects that this perceived failure was one of several factors which brought about Witt's spiritual crisis in the mid-1880s, although it is difficult if not impossible to demonstrate a cause and effect relationship between the two.

It should be emphasised that during the months immediately following his spiritual crisis, Witt appears to have functioned very actively as a missionary both at Oscarsberg and on evangelistic tours, and he pursued vigorously plans to extend the SKM's field. He focused part of his energy on the procurement of a station at which Ljungquist could work. The two missionaries undertook an exploratory journey a few weeks after Witt's spiritual crisis and found what appeared to be a suitable site far to the south-east of Oscarsberg. Witt reported this to the steering committee in September 1885, declaring that the SKM could acquire the farm, called Appelsbosch, on "particularly favourable conditions". He also pointed out that it adjoined a "native location" and that after spending two days there he and Ljungquist were certain that the 4 000 acres were fertile and otherwise suitable for agriculture. No less importantly, Witt had gained the impression that the Zulus who lived near Appelsbosch would prove receptive to the Gospel. He personally favoured outright purchase of the farm but pointed out that one could also advance reasons for renting it.[20] Eventually the SKM chose the former option, and Appelsbosch became the site of Ljungquist's principal ministry to the Zulus. If this has any significance to the analysis of Witt's spiritual development in the mid-1880s, it probably lies in the fact that despite his crisis that year and his critical statements about the perils of highly structured ecclesiastical missions, he had not yet abandoned the conventional pattern of mission stations in favour of pursuing exclusively or even primarily itinerant evangelism.

The Contextual Significance of Witt's Spiritual Crisis

However absorbing some of the details of Witt's crisis may seem to retrospective readers, the larger question of their consequences for his personal spiritual odyssey and the history of the SKM still remains. It is not necessarily easy to answer, because

the developments which it foreshadowed did not take place immediately. Yet a close analysis demonstrates the clear significance of the event to Witt's subsequent path and what soon became a time of turmoil in the SKM's Southern African field.

The contextual importance of Witt's crisis must be understood against the backdrop of the general theological current in the SKM. As Tore Furberg has demonstrated, during the last one-third of the nineteenth century advocates of confessional conservatism gradually wrested control of much Swedish foreign missionary work away from the pietists who had previously been its principal sponsors. Indeed, it was this tendency, together with a desire to have foreign missionary endeavours as an integral function of the church rather than one relegated to voluntary societies, which led to the founding of the SKM in 1874.[21] Witt's spiritual crisis was an indication that he did not fit especially well into this current, if, as appears to be the case, the spiritual tribulations which he endured in 1885 were an early step in the direction of independence and, eventually, anticonfessionalism and withdrawal from the SKM.

It is possible, though improbable, that there was no direct link between Witt's crisis and his later alienation from the SKM. This eventuality should be mentioned if only because Furberg, in his brief consideration of the crisis of 1885, appears to have inferred on the basis of very thin evidence that there necessarily was a cause and effect relationship. Furberg relied heavily on Witt's statement to Tottie in 1886 that he thought it desirable to continue itinerant evangelism. He asserted that this wish "was related to a change in Witt's view of Christianity. He had had active contacts with missionaries from Anglo-Saxon, Reformed backgrounds. In this way he probably had been influenced by the pietistic currents which underlay the Anglo-American missionary movement, even though he himself believed that he was firmly grounded in evangelical Lutheran confessionalism".[22]

There is unquestionably some truth in this, but there are also at least two problems in Furberg's reasoning. Perhaps the more obvious one is that Witt had been engaging in itinerant evangelism for several years before his crisis of 1885. It is therefore too facile to ascribe that facet of his ministry to the spiritual difficulties he experienced that year. Secondly, Furberg's generalisation about Witt's supposedly influential contacts with Anglo-Saxon "Reformed" pietists is questionable. Furberg mentioned

only James Dalzell of Gordon Memorial in this regard, but there is no evidence that that Scottish missionary exercised any theological influence on his Swedish neighbour. In support of his assertion that shortly after his crisis Witt began to read Anglo-American holiness literature (a plausible assumption in the light of the kind of spiritual tribulations he had endured), Furberg quoted Witt's memoirs that "one dogma after another collapsed, being foetuses of human speculation".[23] In fact, Witt was not referring to the "literature of the Anglo-American holiness movement" but rather to the Bible as the inspiration for his shift away from Lutheran confessionalism, as he stated explicitly in his memoirs.[24] On the basis of these assumptions, Furberg then declared that "Witt was now completely won over to revivalistic Christianity of that kind, and he did his work at Oscarsberg in its spirit. His concept of missions was characterised by apocalypticism and individualism. The important thing was to save as many souls as possible from perdition".[25]

In the absence of clear evidence about the sources of Witt's theological shift, it would probably be most prudent to avoid speculation about whether other missionaries in Natal or the works of holiness theologians overseas stimulated this waxing of his subjectivity. After all, there is no compelling reason to assume that new impulses, Anglo-American or otherwise, were necessary for bringing this about. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Scandinavian pietism was to a considerable extent subjectively oriented. The assurance of salvation which Martin Luther and countless other orthodox theologians proclaimed does not appear to have made a major impact in some quarters. Consequently, many Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish Christians of that era frequently examined their spiritual state, and no doubt some perceived imperfections which gave rise to a questioning of their salvation. It may well be that Witt was amongst these people as he sought with limited effectiveness to establish and extend the SKM's programme in Southern Africa. Moreover, it is quite plausible that he had taken to Natal as part of his diverse theological baggage a keen if poorly articulated Biblicism in the tradition of the influential missionary promoter and Bible commentator Peter Fjellstedt, and that this germinated and grew at the time of his theological crisis as he was seeking anchoring points for his drifting faith. Again, however, it should be emphasised that the evidence of this is circumstantial.

The point is not to quibble about a possible misinterpretation on Furberg's part. As stated above, Furberg was probably at least partly correct about the relationship between Witt's crisis and his later withdrawal from the SKM. But contemporary evidence makes it clear that the troubled Swede continued to devote much of his energy to conventional work at Oscarsberg for several more years. He did itinerate more during the latter half of the 1880s, but as we shall see during those years he was also exposed to other impulses which may have had just as great an influence on him as his own crisis appears to have had.

There is no evidence that the leadership of the SKM knew immediately about Witt's crisis or his increasingly critical towards structured ecclesiastical missionary work. Only faint hints of these matters occurred in his letters and reports in 1885. By the following year, however, Witt's superiors in Stockholm and Uppsala had begun to suspect that his view of missionary strategy was deviating from their own. This, as we shall see in the following chapter, was one factor which triggered an inspection of the field which led to sharp rebukes and demands from Sweden that Witt subordinate himself to the authority of the SKM's leaders, something which he would do only reluctantly and temporarily.

Notes

1. Otto, Witt, *Märkliga livserfarenheter. Minnen ur det flydda* (Stockholm, privately published, 1922), p. 26.

2. The story of this pioneer missionary has never been told adequately. The eminent Swedish missiologist Bengt Sundkler lauded but told very little about her in a popular article on the role of female missionaries published in a centenary edition of the SKM yearbook; For this superficial and unreliable account, in which not even Jonatanson's name or dates of life are given correctly, see Bengt Sundkler, "Alla dessa kvinnor. Kvinnogärning genom SKM 1874-1974", *Mission 100. Svenska kyrkans missions årsbok 1974* (Uppsala, n. publ., 1974), pp. 85-88. More reliable, but also very sketchy, is the obituary in *Svenska Kyrkans Missionstidning*, LXXV, no. 24 (15 December 1950), pp. 350-351.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

6. *Luther's Works*. XXIV. *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John* (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1961), pp. 220-221.

7. Carl Norborg, *Arvet från Schartau* (Göteborg, Pro Caritate Förlag, 1951), pp. 250-251; H. Hägglund, *Henric Schartau. Till hundraårsminnet* (Stockholm, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1925), pp. 156-185.

8. P. Rydholm, "Henric Schartau - et hundrafemtioårsminne", *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift*, IX (1908), xxi-xxii; Berndt Gustafsson, *Svensk kyrkohistoria* (Stockholm, Verbum, 1957), p. 182-183.

9. Gottfrid Billing, *Henric Schartau. Minnesteckning* (Lund, C.W.K. Gleerups förlag, 1914), pp. 92-93.

10. H. Hägglund, *I Schartaulärjungarnas krets* (Lund, C.W.K. Gleerups förlag, 1941), *passim*.

11. Benkt Olén, "Johan Henrik Hägglund", in Gunnar Carlquist (ed), *Lunds stifts herdaminne*. Series II. *Biografier*. X, *Åsbo och Bjäre kontrakt* (Lund, Klippan, 1985), p. 389-391.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-33.

13. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Henry William Tottie, 11 December 1885, in *Missions-Tidning*, XI, no. 2 (1886), pp. 24-26.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

15. (Stockholm, privately published, 1895).

16. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

18. University of Uppsala Library, Manuscripts Department, U2505 d:11, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Carl Fries, 25 November 1885.

19. University of Uppsala Library, Manuscripts Department, U2505 d:11, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Uppsala Student Missions-förening, Good Friday 1886.

20. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 3, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1884-1886*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to SKM Steering Committee, 8 September 1885.

21. Tore Furberg, *Kyrka og mission i Sverige 1868-1901* (Uppsala, Svenska Institutet för Missionsforskning, 1962).

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 259-260.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

24. Witt, *Märkliga livserfarenheter*, p. 34.

25. Furberg, *Kyrka och mission i Sverige 1868-1901*, p. 260.

CHAPTER VI

WITT'S ALIENATION FROM THE SKM

Introduction

Despite the testimony to the contrary in his memoirs, Witt's crisis of 1885 did not seriously inhibit his missionary work or have noteworthy immediate consequences. Indeed, from contemporary evidence, most of it from his own hand, it is beyond dispute that he continued to administer Oscarsberg, where the SKM's programme was expanding, and pursue itinerant evangelism on both sides of the Buffalo River. Nor is there reason to believe that apart from relinquishing some of his teaching duties Witt immediately altered his missionary strategy as a result of his crisis. He appears to have carried on much as he had done for another four years with relatively small modifications. As we shall see, however, some of the changes which Witt made, coupled with his more critical attitude towards mission schools, certain arguably uncollegial traits of his personality, and his strained relations with some of his colleagues, created a deteriorating situation at Oscarsberg and in the SKM's Southern African field in general. That was at least the perception of his superiors in Uppsala and Stockholm. In retrospect, there do not seem to have arisen any problems which could not have been solved if the SKM had either been more flexible in its views of missionary strategy and management or adopted definite lines of responsibility in its Southern African field. On the other hand, had Witt maintained better communication with the steering committee of the SKM and been more tactful in changing the duties of some of the personnel at Oscarsberg, he may have been successful in convincing his superiors that the modifications he was implementing could be tolerated. Had that occurred, Witt may have found more sympathy for what by 1886 were noticeable shifts in his theological views which served as targets for confessional Lutherans in the SKM who were otherwise dissatisfied with his missionary methods and his personality. Yet little flexibility was shown in any quarter, and what otherwise might have been merely temporary misunderstandings were allowed to remain unsolved and thereby caused a major cleft between

Witt and others in the SKM. This gradually created an intolerable situation which eventually led to Witt's alienation and departure from the mission.

As Witt continued his missionary work at and near Oscarsberg after enduring his spiritual crisis, he unofficially supervised a growing staff at that station. Perhaps most significantly for the long-term history of the field, the process of indigenisation began during this period. Josef ka Mataka (also known as Josef Zulu), who had accompanied the Witts to Sweden in 1879 and the following year begun a course of study in Stockholm which prepared him for unordained missionary service, remained there for five years before the SKM commissioned him to evangelise his ethnic fellows. He returned to Natal in September 1885 and arrived at Oscarsberg the following month. Josef remained there and at nearby Amoibie for approximately three years, visiting other Zulus in their kraals, preaching at the chapels, and teaching in various capacities. This unquestionably relieved Witt of many tasks, some of which he was clearly happy to surrender to Josef. On the other hand, at times relations between the young Zulu evangelist and either Witt or the steering committee of the SKM were strained. In a lengthy article which was published six years after his death, J.E. Norenius, who then headed the SKM field in South Africa, gave these difficulties a wide berth, referring obliquely to Josef's having to experience "what respective parties thought and said about each other", a process which "was not always so comfortable".[1]

The principal source of tension between Josef and the leadership of the SKM in the mid-1880s also caused Witt headaches. In 1886 the steering committee learnt that Josef had married without receiving permission from his sponsors in Sweden to do so. Shortly after a meeting at which the matter had been deliberated, one member wrote sharply to Witt that this discovery had been a "painful surprise" to the committee and upbraided him for officiating at the wedding. He accused him of "audacity and recklessness" in allowing the young evangelist to take a wife without first consulting his superiors in Stockholm and Uppsala but admitted that the SKM had not enacted rules concerning the marital status of its personnel.[2] The same member of the committee wrote an equally sharply worded letter to Josef and insisted that in future he not "act independently" but rather place himself under the guidance of the

committee.[3] This foreshadowed what soon became a successful effort to place activities in the field under closer supervision.

The other of Witt's first two evangelists was originally named Mamoza Mtetwa. He had fought in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and participated in the destruction of the British force at Isandhlwana. After the conquest of Zululand, he had begun to hear the proclamation of the Gospel in that country. One of the first to preach to and reportedly make an impression on him was Christian Oftebro, the physician whom the Norwegian Missionary Society had sent to Zululand in the 1870s. Mamoza's attraction to Christianity grew during the early 1880s, particularly while he was staying near Pietermaritzburg. By 1884 he had moved to Oscarsberg and begun to work for Witt as a servant. At that time Mamoza was believed to be in his mid-thirties. In December of that year he asked Witt to baptise him. The Swedish missionary began to prepare him for the sacrament, which was administered in November 1885 when he was renamed "Johannes". It is not known when Witt first considered using this convert as an evangelist. Mamoza was still illiterate at that stage, and Witt knew that Josef was being educated for unordained service at Oscarsberg. In any case, in 1885 Mamoza began to attend school, and apparently Witt started to send him out to visit kraals that year, possibly before he was baptised. Jonatanson recalled many years later that Johannes made a determined effort to master what she taught him at the station's school but that both his age and his absence at least twice a week while evangelising hindered his progress. As will be seen shortly, the low ceiling on Johannes' formal education soon became a matter of concern to the leadership of the SKM. It did not, however, prevent Witt from employing him to proclaim the Gospel. Apparently Witt envisaged using Johannes primarily in the vicinity of Oscarsberg, for he encountered resistance from the local magistrate when he applied for a residence permit in Natal. Consequently, Witt found it necessary to send Johannes back to Zululand temporarily, where he resided at the NMS station at Ekombe while applying for the desired permit, which was then granted after Witt appealed to the governor of Natal.[4]

Tottie's Inspection of the Field in 1886

In April 1886 the steering committee of the SKM decided to send its inspector, Henry William Tottie, to Natal to conduct what proved to be a highly consequential inspection of its field there. In addition to that general task, he was to investigate the possibilities for extending the field into occupied Zululand, which at that time the British had not yet officially annexed. Curiously enough, Witt did not mention this inspection in his memoirs, although it indirectly contributed heavily to his subsequent breach with the SKM. Tottie's inspection, the first which the steering committee authorised, was of obvious historical significance, although neither its importance nor the difficulties which he found in the field (particularly those involving Witt) have been adequately covered in the pertinent historiography. For that matter, the leaders of the SKM minimised the latter in a decennial report to the General Assembly of the Church of Sweden. In nebulous terms they stated that the purpose was to "gain familiarity with the many and varied issues which were related to the missionary work amongst the Zulu Kaffers" and indicated some of the reforms which were consequently implemented but made no mention of Witt.[5] This may have been a deliberate effort to keep Swedish contributors to the SKM ignorant of potentially embarrassing matters, because the decennial report was printed in *Missionstidning*, which Tottie then edited.

The popular histories of the SKM's work in Southern Africa which were published early in the twentieth century do not shed much more light on the matter. Karlgren treated Tottie's tour of the field briefly but neither explained why the committee had deemed it necessary nor broached most of the problems which the missionaries were experiencing in the mid-1880s. He referred benignly to "individual cases" in which Witt had too hastily baptised assumed converts to Christianity without adequately preparing them for that sacrament or evaluating their moral standards.[6] On the other hand, in his history of the first fifty years of the SKM's activities in Southern Africa, Lars P. Norenius devoted several pages to Tottie's inspection of the field. Unexcusably absent from his description and analysis of its significance, however, is any explicit reference to Witt. Norenius included a long paragraph on the need for an inspection at that time, but he attributed it chiefly to the necessity of determining how the field

should be expanded and particularly what role Oscarsberg should play in this. Only obliquely did he refer to unspecified tensions amongst the missionaries regarding procedures and strategy.[7] As we shall see, however, much of the inspection involved Witt in various ways and the difficulties which both his personality in general and some of the consequences of his new spiritual direction were causing the SKM.

Tottie, then a *docent* in ecclesiastical history at the University of Uppsala, left Sweden early in June, shortly after the conclusion of the spring semester. He first sailed to England, where he spent four days in London gaining information about the governance of the Anglican Church Mission Society and the nondenominational London Missionary Society. That Tottie gave priority to precisely this matter does not necessarily mean that the steering committee was gravely concerned about it or that major difficulties regarding questions of responsibility then burdened the SKM. It is entirely plausible that a decade after commissioning its first missionary to Southern Africa, and with the probability of significant expansion of its endeavours in view, the steering committee merely believed that it was time to adopt more precise and comprehensive guidelines for administering its affairs. In any case, Tottie secured a copy of the instructions which Anglican missionaries routinely received and sent it to the archives of the SKM in the hope that such a model would prove useful in the resolution of future disputes.[8]

Tottie then boarded the *Garth Castle* and sailed via Lisbon, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and East London to Durban, where he disembarked on 6 July. He approached Natal quite uncertain about the future of the SKM's endeavours, especially with regard to the long-standing but as yet unfulfilled vision of extending it into Zululand. Keenly aware of the recent history of turmoil in what had been Cetshwayo's proud kingdom, Tottie wrote from Cape Town that Dinuzulu had proven incapable of maintaining the peace and stability which effective missionary work required. Indeed, this Swedish missionary administrator went so far as to declare that a mission could not survive there under such conditions. Like many missionaries in Southern Africa, Tottie therefore called for the imposition of a *pax Britannica* in Zululand which would allow evangelisation to proceed under more favourable conditions than hitherto had been the case there.[9] Whether British colonial officials ever learnt of this suggestion is doubtful.

Almost immediately after arriving in Durban and being met by Ljungquist, Tottie proceeded to the offices of Blackwood, Garland & Co., who had handled the SKM's finances in Natal, and discussed its current situation. He found more than an open door there. One of the executives of the firm arranged for him to meet both the new governor of Natal, Sir Arthur Havelock (1844-1908), and the Special Commissioner for Zulu Affairs.

Tottie's stay in Durban was thus enlightening though brief. He believed it would be most expedient and the optimal use of his time to gain insight into missionary activities amongst the Zulus through relatively long stays at the three SKM stations as well as briefer visits at several which belonged to other missions. His first goal was naturally Oscarsberg, where he would discuss the present situation and future of the field at length with Witt. Escorted by three Zulu men whom Witt had sent to Ladysmith to meet him, Tottie proceeded by ox wagon to that station, which he reached on 12 July. He spent three weeks there and at nearby Amoibie. This stay at what was still and long remained the SKM's most important station in Southern Africa gave him many opportunities to observe not only Witt, but also Ida Jonatanson and Josef ka Mataka.

The proximity of Oscarsberg to Zululand offered a splendid opportunity to visit that defeated kingdom. Witt agreed to accompany Tottie across the Buffalo River and take him along on an extended period of what the visitor called "ambulatory evangelism" and would subsequently criticise. Owing to Witt's familiarity with certain regions of Zululand, which he had visited frequently for widely varying lengths of time during the past decade, Tottie was able to come into contact with a relatively broad spectrum of missionary work both there and in parts of northern Natal. Who determined which societies' stations they would visit is unknown. Without question Tottie knew that both the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Schreuder Mission were active in Zululand, and during his brief stay in London he would have learnt (if he had not known it before) that Anglican missionaries also laboured there. In all likelihood Tottie, as an internationally oriented Lutheran, was also aware that the Hermannsburg Missionary Society had established stations in Zululand. It thus seems probable that in accordance with his purpose in travelling to Southern Africa he requested that Witt take him to stations which men sponsored by these societies

had founded. His host obliged and drew up a demanding itinerary. With both men riding on horseback, Witt escorted Tottie for several weeks through both sparsely inhabited regions of the defeated kingdom and to major kraals. They called at stations belonging to Norwegian, British, and German missionary societies before re-entering Natal quite far east and proceeding back to Oscarsberg, which they reached on 13 October after an absence of two months. The amount of time which Tottie spent inspecting various kinds of stations and the variety of Lutheran and non-Lutheran missionaries with whom he spoke in both Zululand and Natal could not, of course, make him an authority on either Zulu culture or means of penetrating it effectively with the Gospel, but he unquestionably gained a broad basis of knowledge and testimonials on which to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the SKM's endeavours in the field.

In relating his travels, Tottie paid particular attention to the work of the two Norwegian Lutheran missions, especially that of the NMS, which he seems to have believed should continue to serve as a model for the SKM's work amongst the Zulus. Witt escorted him to Ntumeni, where he himself had worked for several months shortly after arriving in Southern Africa and where Hans Astrup (1852-1938) had succeeded Hans Schreuder, who had died in 1882. Tottie also visited all of the stations which the NMS was then operating in Zululand (Ekombe, Nhlatzatshe, Eshowe, Mfule, Ungoye, and Empangeni) with the exception of Mbonambi. After leaving Zululand, he spent a week at the NMS station Umpumulo near Mapumulo, just south of the Tugela River, where three ordained missionaries carried out a varied programme which appears to have impressed Tottie. In addition to a chapel and a conventional programme of evangelisation, Umpumulo, which Schreuder had established at mid-century, then boasted schools for Zulus and the children of Norwegian missionaries and colonists. During Tottie's stay at that station, nearly all of the NMS personnel assembled there for a conference. This gathering gave the Swedish guest, who was invited to attend most of the sessions, what he called "quite good insight into the organisation of the Norwegian Zulu mission . . . which in several respects can serve as an appropriate model for that of our Swedish mission". Tottie attributed the governance of the NMS' Southern African field to Schreuder's influence, perhaps not realising that its state in 1886 was actually a reaction against precisely that.

Before Schreuder's departure from the NMS in 1873, he had been embroiled in a dispute with his colleagues in Natal and Zululand, especially after he was consecrated a bishop in 1866. Schreuder had insisted on exercising the same kind of authority in the field which bishops in Norway wielded. His more democratically inclined fellow missionaries, however, insisted on making many decisions collegially at conferences, a practice which Tottie witnessed at Umpumulo.[10] After the conference Tottie accompanied Hans Leisegang (1838-1914), a Dane who had served the NMS amongst the Zulus since 1865, on a "preaching tour" to a location near the Tugela. Tottie was impressed when Leisegang attracted "quite large throngs of heathens" to services held at two schools which the NMS administered there.[11] Apart from that remark, however, the Swede did not comment on the itinerant evangelism at that time. It would not have been difficult for him to discern the fundamental difference between Leisegang preaching in mission schoolhouses and Witt's unstructured wandering through Zululand to proclaim the Gospel at scattered kraals. The distinction was crucial, as Tottie would eventually come down harshly on this increasingly dominant facet of Witt's ministry and his concomitant decrease of interest in conventional missionary work based at stations.[12]

After leaving Umpumulo, Tottie had the opportunity to visit Appelsbosch, where he recovered quickly from an illness he had contracted while travelling with Witt and became familiar with how Ljungquist was building up that new station. Tottie also availed himself of the opportunity to go to the American Congregationalist station Umsunduzi, which had been in operation in central Natal for nearly forty years. There he gained further insight into the organisational structure of a non-Lutheran mission.[13]

Tottie hoped to arrange a meeting at which he and the Swedish missionaries in the field would discuss his observations and how certain reforms could be implemented in the SKM. His principal conclusion was, in his words, that "the steering committee of the SKM must adopt firm regulations for its missionaries with regard to several matters which until now have been left up to the individual missionary and adopt various policies which have been proven to be beneficial and healthy for other missions to this people". Tottie's plans were temporarily frustrated by Fristedt's delay in returning to the field after his furlough in Sweden, but during the third week of

October Tottie, Witt, Fristedt, and Ljungquist met at Oscarsberg and discussed these matters for three days. Tottie then left his fellow Swedes and travelled through Zululand again on his way to Durban. He sailed from there to Cape Town, where he used the opportunity which two free days provided to visit Stellenbosch and see the university there and meet representatives of the Rhenish Mission Society. Tottie then boarded the *Pretoria* on 17 November and sailed back to England. He arrived in Southampton on 7 December and remained in England for ten days before continuing his journey to Sweden. *En route* to Uppsala Tottie spent two days in Helsingborg to deliver greetings from Witt to his father and to preach a mission sermon at the parish church on 19 December.[14] Thus ended his journey of six and a half months.

Tottie's Report and Recommendations

After returning to Sweden, Tottie continued to work on a report to the SKM which he appears to have begun to write while still in Southern Africa. He completed and submitted to the steering committee in February 1887 a handwritten document 101 pages long. Some parts of it were narrative, others descriptive or analytical. Most of Tottie's remarks need not concern us at present, although his comments about Witt and the work at Oscarsberg are highly pertinent and shed additional light on tensions which were building within the SKM and would have a profound impact on Witt's career.

Tottie's observations of and interaction with Witt gave him little reason to believe that the SKM's first representative in Natal should remain in its service. He conceded that Witt was linguistically talented but noted that some of the other missionaries with whom he had spoken had criticised his Zulu translations of Swedish hymns and the Church of Sweden manual. Tottie therefore recommended that if Witt rendered further materials into Zulu another missionary, such as Ljungquist, should be asked to review the translations before they were printed.[15]

What concerned Tottie far more than the imperfections in Witt's command of Zulu, though, were the consequences of his spiritual crisis in 1885. The SKM official

declared that as one result of this Witt had fallen under the influence of unspecified "Reformed writings" and subsequently "developed in a Methodist, ultraprotestant direction". Precisely what Tottie meant by the latter assertion is not clear from his report. In any case, nothing in Witt's known writings indicates that he had accepted Wesleyan concepts of sanctification. His understanding of salvation may have been influenced by Schartau's introspective *ordo salutis*, as indicated in Chapter V. Under Jonatanson's influence, however, Witt seems to have moved in the direction of immediate assurance which neo-evangelism proclaimed, not towards Methodism. How much Tottie knew about that branch of Protestantism is impossible to ascertain, but he declared categorically that Witt's position was "neither Lutheran nor ecclesiastical". As a church historian, Tottie was suspicious of Witt's belief that the literal text of the Bible was normative without regard to the historical development of Christianity. Going beyond strictly doctrinal matters, Tottie also found it regrettable that Witt again had begun to pass severe judgements on his colleagues in the SKM and other Lutheran missionaries in Southern Africa who did not question the orthodoxy of their evangelical tradition. Tottie did not seek to guess where Witt's spiritual odyssey would lead. He believed that Witt's position in 1886 was only a transition but feared that Witt's "inconsistent character and unpredictable mood" might spur him in a completely unorthodox direction. On the other hand, Tottie found hope in Witt's stated desire to be regarded as a Lutheran.[16]

Owing more to Witt's personality than his theology, Tottie suspected that Oscarsberg faced a troubled future. He acknowledged that most of the personnel there usually had generally harmonious relations with each other but lamented that Witt was an exception to this generalisation, even though Witt had assured him that the tensions which had existed between himself and other people were a thing of the past. Tottie found it prudent to take this assurance *cum grano salis* in the light of Witt's long history of conflicts with Schreuder, his fellow missionaries, the German immigrant farmer Bernhard Kraft who had administered Oscarsberg during Witt's absence in 1879-1880, the artisans whom the SKM sent out to rebuild that station, the magistrate in the district, the press in Durban, and other colonists in Natal. What troubled Tottie most, however, was his perception that Witt had still not developed a satisfactory relationship with and won the confidence of the Zulus whom he was

evangelising. Unfortunately, his report sheds very little light on this crucial matter.[17] Neither does Witt's correspondence.

Tottie regarded both of Witt's assistants at Oscarsberg as valuable assets but believed that difficulties which involved Witt to some degree had to be resolved. Tottie praised Ida Jonatanson as "a good acquisition" for the SKM who was performing commendable service by teaching four hours daily at the school and administering the children's home at the station. He feared, however, that she was being overworked and that in the long term her health might thus be impaired. "It is therefore all the more necessary", Tottie declared, "that Witt and Josef [ka Makata] assume some of her responsibilities at the school".[18] Witt, however, was not inclined to do so, but rather to devote an increasing amount of his time to evangelism away from Oscarsberg.

Tottie described Josef ka Makata as a "quite worthy colleague" at the station. What irked the Swedish inspector, however, were the young teacher and evangelist's repeated demands for a larger salary. Tottie found these requests unreasonable. He reported that the NMS paid its Zulu teachers £24 a year and regretted that Witt had earlier proposed £40 as annual remuneration for Josef. To Tottie's relief, however, Witt had recanted and suggested that his teacher and evangelist's salary ought to be reduced, not raised. Beyond that practical matter, the inspector maintained that "Pastor Witt is not the right man to supervise Josef". The young evangelist, he believed, "has sufficiently clear vision to see Witt's weaknesses but too firm a character and too much spiritual stability to be able to like Witt's fanatical moves".[19]

Tottie was less optimistic about Johannes Mamoza, the Zulu convert to Christianity whom Witt was ostensibly educating for service as a catechist. He described him as "not a gifted man" but nevertheless believed that he could become a capable co-worker in the SKM. What concerned Tottie, though, was Johannes' lack of education. To this Swedish academic, it probably seemed almost scandalous that a prospective lay minister could read only simple texts. He found Witt's behaviour in this regard irresponsible. Tottie reported that to his great dismay he had learnt shortly after arriving at Oscarsberg that Witt was not giving Johannes regular instruction, even though the steering committee had assumed that this baptised Zulu was being

groomed for professional service. Instead, he was being rushed into ministry and other work, some of it missiologically questionable. "Even though Johannes, who was baptised in November 1885, is not yet ready to serve as a teacher, Witt has sent him out on preaching tours and also used him as his assistant, both as an evangelist on the mission farm and as a labourer in his private service", wrote the disgusted Tottie. When he had asked Witt for an explanation of Johannes' status, Witt had replied that at thirty Johannes was too old to attend school with the children. The only organised education which he was then receiving, according to Tottie, consisted of spelling lessons which an eleven-year-old Zulu boy gave him under Witt's loose supervision.[20]

Tottie reported at length not only on the personnel at Oscarsberg but also on the various facets of the missionary work there and nearby under Witt's direction. He found the liturgical life of the station particularly heartening. His comments are especially relevant to the present study, because they are one of the few sources of information about Witt's concept of worship at this stage. The focal point of this was the Zulu service held every Sunday morning in the chapel which approximately 100 people regularly filled to capacity. Most of those in attendance were apparently unbaptised; Tottie reported that in 1886 there were twenty-one Zulu converts at Oscarsberg. Despite his otherwise generally negative perceptions of Witt, Tottie praised him for preaching *ex tempore* from the texts in the Swedish Lutheran lectionary and found it gratifying that those in attendance seemed to listen attentively to the linguistically talented missionary. Besides Witt's sermons, the service included the singing of hymns from the collection which he had translated into Zulu several years earlier. In addition to the Sunday services, Tottie commended Witt for arranging meetings on Wednesday evenings at which he preached serially from specific books of the Bible or discussed such works as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the classic seventeenth-century work of Puritan devotional literature which appeared in many Swedish editions during the nineteenth century. These sessions were much less well attended than the Sunday services, however. The third form of community worship for the Zulus at Oscarsberg was the morning and evening prayers in the chapel. The girls from the children's home, the employees of the station, and occasionally other Zulus who resided at Oscarsberg attended. In general Witt led these devotions,

which consisted of Bible readings, singing, and prayer, although at times Johannes or Josef ka Mataka conducted them.[21] This and his use of the former Zulu as an assistant on his evangelistic tours were two of the earliest steps Witt took towards the indigenisation of the SKM's work in Natal.

It is not surprising that the learned Tottie devoted much of his evaluation of conditions at Oscarsberg to the religious and secular educational work being conducted there. In general he was not pleased. Tottie had ample opportunity to observe the instruction of six baptismal candidates at the station. Witt taught them for an hour almost every weekday. Tottie saw little in his pedagogy to commend itself. Most of it consisted of joint reading of the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, or sections of Luther's *Small Catechism*. Tottie reported, perhaps inevitably, that "as a teacher Witt does not possess any noteworthy qualities" and found his practice of going through the *Small Catechism* every month for a year particularly uninspiring. He reasoned that the fruits of his catechetical endeavours confirmed his initial impression that Witt's methods were impoverished. The familiarity of recently baptised Zulus with fundamental doctrines of Christianity seemed to vary immensely, but Tottie generalised that it was quite unimpressive. He also concluded that on the basis of recently baptised Zulus' conduct, to the extent that he could evaluate it, "Pastor Witt, driven by unsound and exaggerated optimism, has admitted heathens much too quickly to baptism in some cases". The Swedish inspector sought to illustrate this by pointing out that two of the older girls at the children's home who had been baptised had subsequently become involved in immoral sexual relations. He suggested that the SKM adopt the relatively stringent policy of the NMS in this regard and not administer baptism to supposed converts to Christianity who had not shown general moral improvement, given testimony of their faith, and promised to honour the obligations of their baptismal covenant. On the other hand, Tottie praised Witt for not admitting any of the recently baptised Zulus to the Lord's Supper because they did not reveal any comprehension of the Lutheran doctrine of that sacrament. He had recently resumed special communion instruction for converts.[22]

Tottie unleashed his most biting criticism of Witt's endeavours as a missionary at his administration of the school at Oscarsberg. Before Jonatanson arrived in 1882

to assist him, the inspector asserted, Witt's management of the incipient educational programme there was "characterised by disorder and laziness", and there was no regular catechetical instruction. The arrival of Jonatanson had allowed Witt to shift from ineptness to exploitation. Her instructions from the SKM steering committee had included assisting Witt with instruction at the station. In Tottie's view, however, he had taken advantage of her presence at Oscarsberg by burdening her with nearly all of the teaching there. Tottie had been unable to determine precisely when this had taken place, but in any case he was certain that Witt had not taught for at least a year. When the SKM official had complained to Witt about this, the latter had allegedly replied that he was "much too good to teach in a school". Tottie, for his part, believed that pedagogically the veteran missionary was not good enough, although he found little fault with Jonatanson's teaching. Like countless other nineteenth-century missionary administrators, Tottie regarded educational work as a vital component in the propagation of the Gospel and of European efforts to elevate the cultural niveau of non-European peoples. Witt, however, viewed this supposed symbiosis differently. "Above all else", reported Tottie, "he wishes to emphasise that educational work lies outside or [at least] beside the task to which God has called him, namely itinerant evangelism". Exacerbating matters further still, the number of children who attended the school had declined by approximately 30 per cent during the past two years, despite the infusion of financial support from the government of Natal. Tottie attributed this to Witt, alleging that the missionary did not have the full confidence of Zulus in the vicinity and that many of them therefore refused to send their children to Oscarsberg to be educated. If that were not enough, Witt wrote to him while Tottie was *en route* to Sweden and informed him that he did not believe the school should accept money from the government. "I do not believe that it has ever been the will of the Lord that we request state aid", he intimated. "His works of love are best done through voluntary contributions of love by his children". Witt predicted that the school would lose its public support, but he seemed to welcome that eventuality. He expressed his conviction that God would thereby prevent him from having to teach at Oscarsberg.[23]

Tottie evaluated Witt's "kraal evangelism" in slightly more than one page. Having upbraided several aspects of Witt's personality and thrust his verbal rapier at his

shortcomings as a teacher and administrator, Tottie was clearly gratified to find an undeniable strength in the SKM's senior missionary in Natal. He did not comment on the details of Witt's techniques in this regard, however, a task which the language barrier rendered difficult. Had he been in a position to describe how Witt approached Zulus at their homes and presented the Gospel to them, his account might have shed light on Witt's missionary strategy as seen from a more representative Swedish Lutheran viewpoint. Instead, Tottie chose to underscore to the leadership of the SKM the significance of this increasingly dominant dimension of Witt's ministry. Tottie suggested that Swedish Lutheran endeavours to evangelise the Zulus should involve more work apart from conventional stations. The only specific aspect of this which he mentioned, though, had also become conventional by that time and may have involved the Norwegian model he had witnessed near Umpumulo, i.e. preaching at out-stations on a definite schedule, such as one Sunday each month.[24] In other words, Tottie was by no means categorically opposed to Witt's itinerancy and made no effort to attribute or otherwise relate it to what he believed was a lamentable, non-Lutheran current in Witt's theology. Rather, his grave concern was that by devoting most of his professional time to itinerant evangelism, Witt was neglecting both educational and religious work at Oscarsberg. This imbalance, as Tottie might have called it, seemed to him inauspicious for the development of a stable Zulu Lutheran church amongst the people to whom Witt and his colleagues in the SKM were bringing the Gospel.

After conveying these and other observations to the steering committee, focusing on difficulties of varying magnitude which he believed required resolution, Tottie made several suggestions for the future governance of the Southern African field. Some, though not all, of these reflected his displeasure with Witt. At the head of his list of reforms, Tottie consciously placed the need for a superintendent. Of all the Scandinavian, British, German, and British missions whose stations he had visited in Natal and Zululand, he pointed out, only the SKM did not have such a responsible person on the scene to oversee its work. Because there was no superintendent, Tottie alleged, the steering committee had been deceived because the individual missionaries had sent in requests for funds and made other proposals which not even their colleagues in the field necessarily examined in advance. He gave two examples

of this, both of which placed Witt in a bad light. The first involved the cost of erecting a building for the children's home at Oscarsberg. In 1885 Witt had requested the steering committee to defray part of the £115 which he estimated it would cost and had given his assurance that income at the station would cover more than one-half of that sum. When he submitted his financial report for that year, however, Witt requested more than £220 in additional support to complete construction. Tottie found this to be an audacious waste of the SKM's limited funds. His second example involved Witt's judgement of other people's conduct. In February 1886 the steering committee considered a request by J.A. Andersson, a Swede who had emigrated to Natal in about 1884, to serve the SKM on a permanent basis. Witt had written an enthusiastic recommendation in this regard. The committee, however, did not have the means to hire Andersson and also thought it imprudent to do so because Lars Norenius (1862-1917) was then preparing to serve the SKM as a catechist in the Southern African field. Tottie, who was curious about Andersson, investigated his conduct and reputation and to his dismay discovered that the erstwhile applicant had lived "a highly unstable and immoral life in Natal and was therefore in ill repute amongst fellow colonists there". Tottie wondered why Witt was either ignorant of this or, if he was not, why he had not mentioned it to the steering committee. He did not specify how the presence of a superintendent in the field could prevent similar incidents from occurring but suggested that employees initially be hired on a temporary, probationary basis.[25]

Tottie did not specify what powers he believed a superintendent should have, but at any rate he does not appear to have favoured the centralisation of authority in any one person. Perhaps this reflected a lack of confidence in all the missionaries the SKM then had in Natal. In any case, he urged strongly that all of them be called together for a conference to take place between 1 June and 1 September annually. At such a meeting, Tottie suggested, only the ordained missionaries would have the right to vote. On the other hand, he favoured allowing those who were in the minority on any given issue to submit a dissenting report. A secretary, whom the missionaries would choose annually, would keep a protocol of each meeting, and nothing would be decided without recording the reasons for doing so. Those in attendance would sign the protocol and send it to the steering committee.

The third matter with which Tottie dealt in his suggestions was the financial chaos which in the SKM's Southern African field. He declared that it was of the "highest importance" that the steering committee finally determine what kinds of expenses the SKM should cover and impose ceilings on them. This would apply in the first instance to the construction of buildings at stations. He found it particularly vexing that at Oscarsberg the Witts had a manse clearly superior to the dwellings which their colleagues inhabited at the other SKM stations in Natal, even though both Fristedt and Ljungquist had assured him that they did not regard this as a noteworthy injustice.[26]

Turning from practical to specifically theological matters, Tottie emphasised what he regarded as the necessity of the SKM conducting its work on an explicitly evangelical Lutheran basis and, "to the greatest possible extent, in accordance with the polity of the Swedish Lutheran Church". In general, the inspector believed, this demand should apply to the liturgy in worship at SKM stations. He gave Witt credit for translating the conventional Swedish Lutheran liturgy into Zulu and adhering to it during his first few years in Natal, although he questioned the wisdom of employing a form of worship intended for established parishes when the congregation consisted entirely, or nearly so, of unbaptised people. What had distressed Tottie in 1886, however, was that Witt had done a liturgical *volte-face* and gone to what seemed to be another extreme. "From his present ultraprotestant viewpoint, he has excluded from the service all formal liturgy (with the exception of the creed) and regards all ecclesiastical formulations as objectionable, because they do not occur literally in the Scriptures", Tottie related. He believed that as the SKM field grew and congregations were gathered, "uniformity" would be necessary in matters pertaining to worship, educational endeavours, and other activities at the station.[27] With this as one of its goals, there would be little room in the firmly ecclesiastical SKM for *de facto* nonconformists like Witt.

The steering committee apparently read Tottie's report soon after he completed it and considered his suggestions promptly in March 1887. Nearly all of his proposals for tightening the governance of the field were adopted, as were most of his other proposed reforms. One exception was Tottie's belief that the SKM needed a superintendent in Natal. The committee thought the field was not sufficiently developed

to warrant designating such an officer. Furthermore, there was no likely candidate for the post.[28]

Tottie wrote in an almost triumphant tone to Witt on 11 March 1887 to inform him that the steering committee had adopted his suggestions and that reforms would consequently be implemented in the Southern African field. He began with fundamental doctrinal matters. The committee, Tottie emphasised, insisted that "the missionary work of the Church of Sweden be done emphatically in accordance with the basic doctrines of the evangelical Lutheran church and, to the greatest extent possible, according to the polity of the evangelical Lutheran church". In what Witt may have regarded as a gratuitous and unnecessary demand, Tottie told him to declare his unity with the Swedish Lutheran church. Beyond that, Witt was to confer with his ordained colleagues in the field to determine how they would achieve an unspecified degree of uniformity at their respective stations with regard to liturgical and other procedural matters. Tottie specifically mentioned that only books which the steering committee had approved were to be used at the schools and in the services of worship at the stations. The SKM inspector also stated, less ingenuously, that the committee shared his views about the necessity of having a superintendent to oversee its work amongst the Zulus. He did not go into detail about this matter, possibly owing to the absence of an obvious candidate for the position, but he indicated at length that Witt and his colleagues were to begin to discuss at annual conferences matters pertaining to their work and to send reports of their discussions to the steering committee. Most of his comments in this regard echoed the corresponding section of his lengthy report.

Tottie went into considerably more detail in informing Witt how the educational programme at Oscarsberg was to be conducted. He encouraged him to attempt to increase the number of children who attended the school there and to share the teaching duties with Josef ka Mataka. Witt, moreover, was to give Josef lessons twice weekly. The young Zulu evangelist, as part of this continuing education, was to write and send to the steering committee twelve essays in Swedish every year. Johannes Mtetwa, the somewhat older Zulu whom Witt was preparing for service as an evangelist and who indeed had already begun to work in that capacity, was

to attend school at Oscarsberg for at least two hours daily in addition to the specifically ministerial preparation which Witt was giving him.[29]

Three overarching themes emerge from Tottie's directives to Witt. First, the leadership of the SKM was intent on imposing stricter governance on the field in Natal. This would obviously have consequences for a man like Witt who had grown accustomed to exercising a great deal of autonomy and reporting his actions only in limited detail and from his own perspective to superiors on the other side of the world. Secondly, while Witt was proceeding in the direction of religious subjectivity and representing what Tottie too loosely called a "Methodistic" or an "ultraprotestant" theological position, the SKM was emphasising its Lutheran confessional heritage and insisting that its missionaries in the field do likewise. Thirdly, at a time when Witt was rapidly becoming disenchanted with conventional forms of education at Oscarsberg and devoting an increasing amount of his time to itinerant evangelism, the SKM was committed to maintaining an active programme of educational endeavours at its stations and expected its missionaries to devote much of their time to them. That the leadership of the SKM and Witt had embarked on diverging roads was apparent to Tottie. He could not have predicted, however, the course which the SKM's first missionary in Africa would follow on his tortuous spiritual odyssey during the remaining years of the 1880s.

Government Inspection of the Oscarsberg School

If one relies exclusively on internal SKM sources, especially Tottie's severely critical report, one may gain the impression that the school which Witt founded at Oscarsberg declined markedly during the latter half of the 1880s as he devoted his time increasingly to itinerant evangelisation. Tottie, however, appears to have allowed his dislike of Witt and his concern for the development of a stable ministry at Oscarsberg to colour his perception of the educational programme at the station.

Fortunately, less tendentious observations are available in the form of the reports which the Natal inspector of native education filed annually. Though sketchy, they offer a less bleak picture of the school at Oscarsberg than that which emerges from

the pertinent Swedish documents. Free of concern about doctrinal matters or the efficacy of various forms of evangelisation, the inspectors focused their attention on the number of children who attended the school, the amount of instruction these pupils received, and their ability to show progress on standardised examinations. These government officials also recorded subjective impressions which flesh out the statistical skeletons in their reports.

The government of Natal began to include the Oscarsberg school in its annual round of inspections after awarding a monthly educational grant of £2 to Witt in 1885.[30] When the inspector visited Oscarsberg late the following year, he found seven boys and nine girls enrolled in its school. Of these sixteen children, ten of whom were over twelve years of age, an average of eleven attended on each of the 203 days on which instruction was given in 1886. Seen through British colonial eyes, the results they achieved were still quite meagre. Eleven of the children were taught exclusively in Zulu, whereas English served as one medium of instruction for the other five. None of the pupils, however, could read English, and only six were "able to write a fair small hand". Only four of the young Africans could "work sums up to simple subtraction"; none had arithmetic skills beyond that level. The children's most significant educational progress was apparently on the practical front: fourteen of them had learnt to do "plain sewing". The inspector also noted under the culturally revealing rubric "Means taken to encourage conformity with European habits" that the teachers encouraged "cleanliness and tidiness", but he did not express the extent to which the children were adopting these ostensibly European characteristics.[31]

From these modest beginnings Witt's school made fairly steady if generally slow progress during his remaining years of service to the SKM. When Frederick Bernard Fynney (1839-1888), the inspector of native education, visited Oscarsberg in October 1887, he found that the number of pupils had risen to thirty-six. Eighteen of them were boys, half of whom were under twelve years of age. Of the eighteen girls, eleven were under twelve. The average daily attendance was only twenty, or about 55 per cent of the pupils. The percentage of the children who were receiving part of their instruction in English or who could do arithmetic beyond subtraction had not risen. Fynney was nevertheless satisfied with what he saw at Oscarsberg,

especially outside the classroom. He noted that "all the scholars presented a neat appearance" and praised what he called the "Oscarsberg Girls' Home" whose Zulu residents attended the school. Fynney commended Jonatanson for training them to be "good domestic servants". In short, at least from the perspective of this colonial official, Witt and his colleagues were performing satisfactorily to prepare a few dozen young Zulus for their subservient place in a British-dominated society. Thus both Fynney's criteria for evaluating the school and his perception of its results differed from those of Tottie, whose concern was with the establishment of a stable institutional ministry and congregation at Oscarsberg.

The school then suffered a decline in the number of pupils enrolled. Robert Plant (1844-1921), who succeeded his fellow Englishman Fynney in 1888, inspected Oscarsberg in November of that year. Twenty-four children were then enrolled, only seven of whom had attended for at least two years. Five of these "passed Std. I creditably"; most of the other young Zulus were still acquiring the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic. All, however, received instruction in singing and the Bible. Plant concluded that the school was "fairly satisfactory" and praised Witt as a man who "appears deeply interested in its success. . .".[32]

Plant's next inspection of Oscarsberg took place in October 1889, when Witt was in the process of terminating his relationship with the SKM. The inspector was "pleased to report that satisfactory progress has been made during the year, both in numbers and school work". Despite Witt's extended absences from Oscarsberg, enrollment had risen sharply to thirty-nine. Thirty-two of these children were then receiving part of their instruction in English, and the arithmetic skills of the pupils had generally improved. Plant generalised that "handwriting in the school is very good" and reported that an additional classroom had been built.[33]

Assuming that the reports of these inspectors are reasonably accurate analyses of the development of educational work at Oscarsberg, the complaints of Witt's superiors in the SKM obviously lose part of their cogency. Witt's repeated forays into Zululand and his trips to Durban do not appear to have adversely affected the instruction of young Zulus at Oscarsberg, although one could argue that his uninterrupted presence at the station may have further enhanced it. The grievances of the steering committee in Stockholm and Uppsala, to the extent that they were

valid, were that its most experienced missionary in Southern Africa was departing from Lutheran orthodoxy and demonstrating his independence from his superiors during a time when they were seeking to tighten discipline within the SKM.

Witt as Amateur Missiologist

During the mid-1880s Witt was writing a book in which he expounded his principal views of missionary theology and methods. Precisely when he began to commit these thoughts to paper is unknown. Curiously enough, apparently nothing in the records of the SKM refers to his book, so it is difficult to ascertain the circumstances under which Witt wrote it. Much in it, however, is clearly a defensive reaction to the criticisms which Tottie had levelled at him. The volume, titled *Kristus i hedningarne, härlighetens hopp* (i.e. Christ amongst the Heathens, the Hope of Glory), was published in Stockholm in 1887. Intended in the first instance for Swedish readers, Witt's book also had an exhortative purpose, namely to stimulate interest in the SKM's work. Yet it is also a modest contribution to Protestant missionary theology as it was then developing in several European countries. This volume was not, however, evidence that its author was swimming with or even in the same stream as contemporary missiologists whose works received much greater notice. On the contrary, even though Witt prefatorily addressed it to his Swedish Lutheran brethren and insisted that he stood squarely in the same tradition as they did, it contains numerous indications that the seeds of his eventual alienation from it had been sown in fertile soil.

Witt's own contribution to the field of missiology was unimpressive, both in its own right and in its failure to make a lasting impression on Swedish missionary thought. His book is nevertheless of seminal importance to a historical study of him, chiefly because it reveals in great detail how far he had progressed on his spiritual odyssey. Witt's treatise covers several general topics, such as the Biblical mandate to propagate the Gospel amongst the gentiles, the duty of the church as such to engage in missionary work, the role and legitimacy of parachurch missionary societies, relations between churches and voluntary societies on the one hand and

the missionaries whom they sponsor on the other, the primary content of preaching on mission fields, the place of women in missionary endeavours, and difficulties which such customs as polygamy pose. Generally speaking, Witt dealt only briefly with anthropological topics, preferring instead to focus his attention on Biblical justifications for positions he represented regarding several of these questions. His book therefore contains copious references to both Old and New Testament texts but little empirical data which would shed light on the operations of the SKM. Stylistically it is uneven but generally palatable. It reveals the thought of an earnest man who was striving to remain a loyal servant of the Church of Sweden but whose notions of missionary strategy and related matters had begun to depart from those of many of his colleagues and superiors.

Witt devoted a great deal of space to justifying missions to people whom he collectively called "the heathens" (*hedningarne*) or "the gentiles". Precisely why he believed such justification was necessary when addressing Swedish readers is not readily comprehensible. To be sure, this motif had been current in Christendom since apostolic times and is a central theme in the Acts of the Apostles. Yet by the 1880s there was no significant debate in Sweden as to whether the Lutherans should be engaged in foreign missions. The involvement of their national church was by then a *fait accompli.* Nevertheless, Witt pointed out at length that much of both the Old Testament and the New deals with non-Jewish peoples and reminded his Swedish readers that they too belonged to that broad category. The most central of the many Bible verses which Witt quoted in this respect was the Great Commission in Matthew 28. He also asserted that to the best of our knowledge all of the apostles had heeded Christ's commandment to proclaim the Gospel to the gentiles.[34]

Having established that point to his own satisfaction, Witt presented what was probably a more immediately relevant argument, namely that one primary obligation of the church as such is to propagate the Gospel at all times. This point was relevant in Sweden at that time (although it had been more current during the 1870s than in the 1880s), because in that country, as in Norway, there was a debate over whether the church itself or voluntary organisations comprising people who were members of the church should bear the responsibility for foreign missionary work. The

foundation of the SKM in the mid-1870s had not solved this question to the satisfaction of all, and some essentially Lutheran parachurch bodies were still active in propagating the Gospel overseas.[35] Witt did not make distinctions in his argument that churches should be oriented towards missions. "Regardless of the form in which it appears during its earthly existence, be it as a state church or a free church, its duty is to take the message of salvation to the heathens, wherever the Lord indicates this as its duty". Moreover, he looked askance at what probably seemed to be suspicious excuses advanced for not undertaking missionary work. Witt argued that even if an individual church or denomination did not believe it had a "direct call" from God to propagate Christianity, its general duty to do so still applied. The commandment to take the Gospel abroad remained in effect even when such work did not bear visible fruit.[36]

One of Witt's purposes in writing *Kristus i hedningarne* was evidently to enhance Swedish interest in missions. He treaded gingerly in chiding the relatively slow start which the Church of Sweden had made in becoming involved in this branch of ministry, tactfully nodding in assent to the historical path it had taken. Witt acknowledged that Martin Luther had not expressed a great deal of interest in missionary work and that until recently only individual Lutheran congregations and societies, not Lutheran denominations as such, had become involved in it. The slowness of this historical development, he wrote apologetically and in what at first glance may seem to be an unevangelical way, was part of "God's plan" because as heirs of the Reformation "we first had to work on our own salvation in fear and trembling before we could work on that of others". Witt specifically praised the Church of Sweden for entering the field and lauded its choice of places in Africa and Asia to spread the Gospel.[37]

In his discussion of churches' duty to become involved in missionary endeavours, Witt underscored that they themselves should send out the missionaries and maintain close links with their personnel in the field. As he put it, the churches should be able to feel that they themselves are in the mission field, and that in their missionaries they should be able to see "a living expression of their own Christian faith and confession, their own cordial relationship to the Saviour". The missionaries, on their part, should help to uphold this relationship and nurture the spirituality of

their sponsoring churches through deputation work consisting of lectures and sermons. In connection with this Witt, then still a loyal member of the Church of Sweden, emphasised his belief that regardless of whether a church or a voluntary society had sent a missionary to the field, the links were vital to the survival of the work. In other words, he had no confidence in the viability of missionaries who worked entirely independently of sponsoring bodies. As Witt expressed it bluntly, "We do not believe that a free mission can endure".[38] In another context, he discussed the related question of how missionaries should be supported. Witt's position was typical of ecclesiastical missions. "The missionary who preaches the Gospel ought to receive his full support for doing so", he reasoned. "The congregation ought to support him". Perhaps with his Hermannsburg acquaintances in mind, Witt declared that missionaries should not have to devote even part of their time to agricultural or other secular pursuits. He particularly emphasised the necessity of avoiding any transactions which could be misconstrued as exploitation of the indigenes.[39] These points are highly relevant to a consideration of the contours of Witt's missiological thought. As will be seen in Chapter VII, his view of this matter underwent a profound shift during the late 1880s and had a great impact on the history of the Free East Africa Mission, with which he became involved in 1889, shortly before he officially left the SKM.

Few of Witt's Swedish Lutheran colleagues would have found most of the positions which he represented in *Kristus i hedningarne* objectionable, but some of his statements hinted at the loosening of his ties to the Church of Sweden. Perhaps nowhere was this more clear than in his quasi-ecumenical outlook. Having bent over backwards to apologise for the tardiness of the Church of Sweden in entering foreign missionary work and repeatedly underscored his loyalty to that denomination, he qualified his position by declaring that "the mission field is not a Lutheran field" and that only God would determine whether "one people or another should be under a Lutheran, Calvinist, or other spirit during the time of their development". Witt explicitly praised the Reformed impulse in missionary work in Southern Africa and lauded the missionaries in the Scottish Free Church as being superior to their counterparts from any state church.[40] At a time when denominational pluralism

was a recent development in Sweden which many of his colleagues there resented, this attitude was at least a mild departure from tradition.

Witt's comments about the desirability of pursuing missionary work in Zululand also reflected the early stages of his alienation from the SKM but by no means were a verbal assault on that organisation. He attributed the inability of the SKM to enter that field, which had been its goal in Southern Africa from the outset, to political instability there and blamed "England" for not fulfilling promises to facilitate the establishment of more missionary work in Zululand. Witt's own desire to cross the Buffalo River was as keen as ever, and he defended his goal of proclaiming the Gospel there. "It has often been asserted by opponents of Zulu missions that no other heathen land is more replete with mission stations than Zululand", he stated. "It is nevertheless certain that while Zululand has many missionaries, it has few if any evangelists, and the latter are precisely what are needed".[41] In this statement inhered a transparent defence of his gradual shift to itinerant evangelism and a concomitant minimising of the value of conventional activities at mission stations.

At least two other themes in *Kristus i hedningarne* foreshadowed subsequent developments in Witt's theology. The first of these was his budding interest in millenarianism. Extensive research done in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Europe during the 1970s and 1980s cast a great deal of light on the attention paid on both sides of the Atlantic during the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century to the anticipated Second Coming of Christ. As has been demonstrated by Ingemar Lindén,[42] myself,[43] and other scholars, various kinds of millenarianism had become fairly well known but by no means universally accepted in Scandinavia by the 1880s. Precisely who influenced Witt's eschatology at that time is difficult to ascertain. It is theoretically possible that he arrived at his eschatological position of 1887 merely by perusing the prophetic passages of the Old and New Testaments. It seems more plausible, however, that he did so by reading either Swedish or British millenarian treatises, possibly works published in Southern Africa. One of the Swedes whose works about the Second Advent may have been available to him was the Lutheran Bible scholar and missionary Peter Fjellstedt, whose publications about eschatology had gained considerable attention in Sweden. Another was the Swedish-American evangelist Fredrik Franson, who

had emigrated as a child to the United States and in the 1870s been influenced by Dwight Moody and other millenarians in Chicago. Franson returned to Sweden in 1881 and combined revival campaigns with the propagation of millenarianism through the publication of books on the subject and "prophetic conferences", meetings of the type in which he had participated in the United States and at which interested individuals presented their eschatological views. Generally speaking, he espoused the futurist millenarianism which the Irish evangelist John Nelson Darby had popularised earlier in the nineteenth century. Witt's own eschatology does not appear to have reached the state of refinement in 1887 which it would later attain, and the parallels between it and that of Franson are vague. It may be relevant to point out that the two men met in the 1890s after Witt had left the SKM, although obviously that encounter proves nothing about the etiology of Witt's millenarianism.

Whatever its sources were, there is clear evidence that the seeds had been sown when Witt wrote *Kristus i hedningarne*. He placed missionary work in general into an eschatological context by broaching Romans 11 and Revelation 2. Witt explained that his and others' endeavours to propagate Christianity were only an early step in the ultimate plan of salvation. Before this could be culminated, he believed, the heathens would have to be converted. Witt harboured no illusions that all would accept Christ. Rather, he asserted that "by the 'perfection of the gentiles' we must understand a sufficiently large number of gentiles who are chosen for the preparatory work, before the time of the real harvest comes". Like most other millenarians, Witt was convinced that the Second Coming would occur "very soon". "God's seventh day is beginning to dawn", he asserted. Witt made the standard assertion that "signs of the times" pointed to the imminence of Christ's return but gave no explicit indication of what he was interpreting as such portents. He did, however, point out that he subscribed to the widely held "year-day theory", according to which millenarians interpreted II Peter 3:8 ("with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day") as evidence that wherever the term "day" occurred in Biblical passages relating to the return of Christ it should be understood as actually meaning one year. This gave him some degree of latitude in reading those texts without diminishing his eschatological zeal.[44]

It should be emphasised that in the few explicitly millenarian paragraphs of *Kristus i hedningarne* Witt did not seek to present a detailed millenarian theology. Moreover, he neither attempted to predict when Christ would return nor evaluated any of the many millenarian treatises then in print. The development of Witt's eschatology would take place in the 1890s when he wrote a short book on the subject. That volume will be discussed in Chapter VIII. In itself this evolving element of Witt's theology did not play a direct role in his gradual alienation from the SKM, although its further development in the late 1880s probably contributed to his alienation from its emphasis on schools and other aspects of a programme based at stations.

The other theme in Witt's first book which presaged a significant future development in his religious thought and indeed his lifelong ministry was the emphasis he began to place on the role of unusual gifts of the Holy Spirit. Lutherans, like all other Christians, are charismatic in one sense or another; indeed, that Reformation tradition had always stressed the centrality of one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, namely faith. At most times and in virtually all Lutheran denominations, however, including the Church of Sweden during the nineteenth century, scant attention had been paid to the two *charismata* which are popularly seen as the hallmarks of Pentecostalism, namely glossolalia and healing. To the extent that Witt was a proto-Pentecostal in the 1880s, he was an anomaly who no longer matched the stereotype of the Swedish Lutheran clergyman.

Discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit plays only a minor part in *Kristus i hedningarne*, but two decades before the Pentecostal movement reached Scandinavia Witt appeared as a harbinger of it. In a statement which seems to have been linked to his belief that he was emulating apostolic practice by becoming an itinerant evangelist, he asserted that the "extraordinary gifts" were the hallmark of the primitive church. Witt saw no reason to believe that the validity of these *charismata* had been limited to the first century. Alluding to Mark 16, he declared that missionaries should engage in "a literal partaking of the gifts which are promised to those who preach the Gospel in heathen lands; . . . they shall drive out evil spirits, speak in new tongues, pick up serpents, and, if they drink something which is lethal, it will not harm them. Furthermore, they should lay hands on the sick and heal them". Perhaps to obviate charges of extreme subjectivity, Witt underscored his assumption

that Christ, not individual Christians, was performing the healing in cases of laying on of hands. He also assumed a conventional Lutheran position by stating that there was no essential difference between the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" and baptism with water.[45] As was the case with Witt's incipient millenarianism, there was little in his stance on the gifts of the Holy Spirit with which many Swedish Lutherans would have strongly disagreed, even though there is no evidence that a significant number of his colleagues in Sweden or elsewhere in Scandinavia were then heralds of the Pentecostal movement, which in fact many opposed stiffly after it reached northern Europe early in the twentieth century. The historically noteworthy point is that at least as early as 1887 Witt began to represent and publish views which foreshadowed his later involvement in Pentecostalism and in doing so was moving in a much different direction from the confessional Lutheranism which the SKM was propounding and which Tottie was then insisting be part of the unifying doctrinal basis of its field in Natal.

Witt devoted a considerable part of *Kristus i hedningarne* to various practical matters pertaining to missionary work in Natal. A few of the most salient of these deserve mention here. Witt obliquely defended himself from Tottie's charges that he baptised converts without adequately testing their moral standards. Not only did he insist on examining conduct, he declared, but also "their knowledge of the way of salvation". Witt wrote imprecisely that "a certain degree of knowledge must therefore be required before baptism can be administered", but he did not specify how catechumens at Oscarsberg or the other SKM stations would be taught. Again in apparent response to suggestions that he was not a full-fledged Lutheran, Witt declared his allegiance to the practice of infant baptism in accordance with the Lutheran understanding of that sacrament, which involved the keystone Reformation principle of *sola gratia.*

No less defensive were his fairly extensive remarks about itinerant evangelism. Witt did not deny that mission stations could serve a purpose in the field, but he insisted bluntly that to restrict missionary endeavours to them was to leave "the vast masses of the people outside their influence". The increasingly peripatetic evangelist observed that apart from the relatively few people who resided at or very near the stations he had found the "deepest ignorance" of the Gospel amongst the

Zulus. Moreover, missionaries could best gain the trust of the indigenes by taking the message of salvation in Jesus Christ directly into their homes. Going beyond human arguments for kraal evangelism, Witt played what he probably thought was his highest rhetorical card by stating that to wander from place to place seeking to propagate Christianity was "in literal accordance with His own way of acting and with the plan which His own apostles followed according to His will".[46]

On the other side of this coin was Witt's disparagement of mission schools. This, too, was a thinly veiled response to Tottie's critical attitude. Witt was not so tactless that he attacked the SKM's educational programme directly. Instead, he in effect defended his shift of emphasis from the school at Oscarsberg to itinerant evangelism by declaring that there had been an inversion of priorities. From Witt's perspective, the SKM - and, for that matter, many other missions - had committed a fundamental error by giving primacy to the establishment of its schools in the hope that by influencing children it could eventually gather churches. "The school has great importance on the mission field", he countered, "but not during the first period". Witt reasoned that amongst "raw people of nature", amongst whom he numbered the Zulus, "the school ought to proceed from the church, not the church from the school". The logic which he employed to substantiate this assertion was weak and ambiguous, consisting of little more than Witt's belief that in the absence of a decidedly Christian voice the introduction of "civilisation", usually involving alcoholic beverages and firearms, was destructive. Witt also declared that "Sodomite abominations" developed at those mission stations where secular ministries, such as educational work, ran ahead of the proclamation of the Gospel. Again, however, he did not at that time adduce specific examples to bolster this claim.[47]

The Significance of Andrew Murray to Witt

As indicated in Chapter I, Tore Furberg attributed much of Witt's theological transformation and emphasis on itinerant evangelism during the latter half of the 1880s to the influence of the renowned Dutch Reformed pastor Andrew Murray. This attribution, however, appears to be exaggerated and involves various historio-

graphical problems, only one of which is the fact that several decades later Witt himself gave Murray part of the credit for making an impact on him. Relying largely on Witt's error-ridden memoirs and a letter which Witt wrote to Tottie in 1887, Furberg declared that "when Witt came into contact with Murray at the beginning of 1887, this was of significance for what followed. Murray was engaged in active evangelism everywhere in South Africa. During one of his preaching tours, he held a series of revival meetings in Natal in the vicinity of Oscarsberg". This particular campaign, Furberg believed, marked a new era in Witt's career: "In connection with this, Witt was together with him for three days, and by his own account was strongly impressed by his personality and preaching. Heeding Murray's prompting, he himself began to hold open revival meetings at Oscarsberg".[48] A more comprehensive perusal of the pertinent evidence, however, indicates that it is less unambiguous than Furberg implies and that important differences separated Witt from Murray.

It is true that Murray had added an ambulatory dimension to his ministry beginning in the late 1870s. Indeed, his denomination had begun to show an interest in evangelism apart from normal parish ministry at least as early as 1876. In that year its periodical, *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode* (i.e. The Reformed Church Messenger), reproduced from *Sunday at Home* a serial article on Moody and Sankey, whose lengthy tours of the British Isles were gaining intercontinental attention.[49] Briefer notices about Moody and excerpts from his sermons also appeared in the *Kerkbode*, which in 1877 carried a two-part article about a previous and equally influential American evangelist, the late Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875).[50] The publication of such materials reflected a heightened consciousness of extraordinary means of proclaiming the Gospel and a belief on the part of at least some Dutch Reformed Christians that they should encourage them. At the 1876 synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, representatives appointed a committee to deal with "Special Preaching of the Gospel". This body encouraged clergymen who felt so called to undertake evangelistic tours.[51]

This new emphasis reflected Murray's personal concerns, and his role in bringing it about was probably crucial. In 1876 he had privately expressed the belief that "the great need of our Church is evangelists".[52] Murray undertook the first of several itinerant campaigns in 1879 after writing a spirited defence of such evangelisation

in the *Kerkbode*.[53] At that time the indefatigable Murray was the pastor of a congregation in Wellington which he continued to serve for most of the rest of his life, despite frequent absences from it, primarily to preach the Gospel elsewhere in Southern Africa and overseas. It was on his tour of Natal in 1887, when he addressed both Afrikaners and English speakers in their respective languages, that Witt first heard him.[54]

Witt wrote two reports of the encounter, and the statements which he made in them are not necessarily compatible. In one published in the SKM's periodical the following year, he indicated that Murray had advised him to "try to imbue the people with the truth through a series of revival meetings". He did not specify whether these were at Oscarsberg or elsewhere.[55] In a private letter to Tottie, however, who had met Murray in the Cape during his inspection of the SKM field in 1886, Witt stated that he had heard Murray not near Oscarsberg but in Biggarsberg, well to the west of his station, at services for Afrikaans-speaking farm people. There is no reason to assume that Witt could understand that language, although it is conceivable that he nevertheless attended the meetings because of curiosity about the well-known Murray. In any case, several of these Boers had requested Witt to come to their properties and preach to their Zulu employees.[56] This does not, of course, exclude the possibility that Murray also encouraged him to hold special services at Oscarsberg.

In any case, one should not exaggerate the common ground between Witt and Murray, which was minimal. Both the general shape of the latter's ministry and the emphases of his "special evangelisation" set him apart from the independent course which the Swede followed increasingly in the late 1880s. If one can draw a rough analogy between Oscarsberg and Murray's church in Wellington, then one of the differences becomes obvious. Witt eventually abandoned his station to devote his entire ministry to largely itinerant evangelism, whereas Murray remained principally a man of the parish. But even in terms of their evangelistic activities they were to some extent a study in contrasts. Murray emphasised *inter alia* the necessity of adequate preparation in a congregation, the value of follow-up meetings, and the desirability of holding a protracted series of meetings in one place. As we shall see, Witt's loose evangelisation in Zululand and immediately south of it near

the Tugela River included practically none of these desiderata, all of which necessitated a higher degree of structure and co-operation with established congregations than he was in a position to have. Theologically, there is no evidence that Witt had any familiarity with Murray's increasing emphasis on continuing sanctification.

Witt's Call to Durban

By the winter of 1889 the die had apparently been cast and Witt's eventual departure from the SKM was virtually inevitable. He had abandoned much of his work at Oscarsberg in favour of itinerant evangelism, and he would soon inform the steering committee that he was in disagreement with its Lutheran confessional orthodoxy. Witt's wife was in failing health, and his children needed more education than was available to them at or near Oscarsberg. It may therefore have seemed providential to this discontented missionary that during the crisis he received a call to become the pastor of the troubled Scandinavian immigrant church in Durban.

That congregation, which was essentially and officially non-Lutheran, stood closer to Witt in terms of theology and the shape of its ministry than did the orthodox Lutheran SKM at the end of the 1880s. Its appeal to Witt, and his to it, can only be understood against the historical backdrop of Scandinavian religious strife in Durban which eventually gave rise to two competing Nordic congregations there. Following the failure of a very short-lived attempt to establish a colony in the Aldabra Islands, a few dozen Norwegians, some of whom were Baptists, settled in Durban in 1879. There they met other Norwegians and Swedes who had fled the rages of the Anglo-Zulu War, among them Witt's colleague Carl Ludvig Flygare. Together these Scandinavians, the majority of whom appear to have been Lutherans, formed an unconstituted congregation which Flygare led in worship thrice weekly at a Wesleyan schoolhouse. After the end of the war Flygare left Durban to resume his missionary work. His departure did not pose an insurmountable problem, however, because the small congregation continued under the lay leadership of Rasmus Rasmussen (1854-1912), a pietistic Norwegian who later became a pastor in the United

States of America. He conducted his ministry in Durban on only a part-time basis, though, as did Anders Olsen, another layman from Norway. Ordained men from the Norwegian Missionary Society supplemented their preaching and administered the sacraments during their occasional stays in Durban. In 1881 and 1882 the congregation briefly had the ministerial services of Johan Moe (1827-1899), a Norwegian pastor who had served the Hermannsburg Mission Society for nearly two decades. He was released, however, when it was discovered belatedly that his departure from the Hermannsburg organisation in 1877 was due to his deviation from the theology of the Atonement taught in Article III of the *Augsburg Confession.* The Scandinavians in Durban thus muddled through the rest of the 1880s with very little pastoral leadership. During that decade an influx of immigrants from the Nordic countries nevertheless increased the membership of their congregation somewhat, although it is impossible to determine what its size was.

In any case, the presence of Lutherans, Baptists, and possibly others in this loose assembly soon gave rise to internal strife. When the church was officially constituted in 1882 or 1883,[57] the majority of its members probably came from the Scandinavian state churches, as the new body was designated "Lutheran", and its constitution stipulated that its leaders be in that tradition and declared that the *Augsburg Confession* would be its theological norm. Not all the members accepted this. By 1886 they had become numerically strong enough to demand that the congregation delete "Lutheran" from its name and references to the *Augsburg Confession* from its constitution. In 1887 the congregation, still superficially united but suffering from a *de facto* schism, erected in West Street a corrugated iron building and bestowed on it the nondenominational name *Skandinavisk Kapel* (i.e. Scandinavian Chapel). Precisely when Witt initially came into contact with this congregation is unknown, but in any case he had become acquainted with it by 1889.

In what was probably not a coincidence, when the SKM missionaries gathered for their periodic conference at Appelsbosch in July 1889 they discussed the possibility of undertaking work in Durban. The minutes of that meeting do not indicate who proposed this expansion of the field or even whether Witt, whom one must suspect of suggesting it, was present. In any case, someone in attendance mentioned that there were approximately 12 000 migratory black labourers in Durban,

sixty Scandinavian ships were expected to call there during the next six months and many other seamen from the Nordic countries worked on vessels of non-Scandinavian registry which visited Durban, and the resident Scandinavian population of the city had expressed interest in having a missionary preach to them. The assembled missionaries informed the steering committee of the SKM that they believed it would be desirable to resume some of the work which Flygare had undertaken there in the late 1870s during the Anglo-Zulu War. They added, however, that if an SKM representative were stationed in Durban, he should limit his ministry to the black population of the city and Scandinavian seamen, and not become the pastor of the Scandinavians there.[58]

This was the situation which obtained when Witt visited Durban in mid-1889. Although his stay there was brief, he ministered to the congregation and became acquainted with some of its leaders. In August one of them, a Norwegian named Anders Gørven who had been in Natal for nearly a decade, wrote to Witt that "it would be a joy to us if God would allow you to come down here permanently". Gørven explained that approximately thirty Scandinavian families were connected to the congregation but did not indicate how actively they were involved in it. He further pointed out that there were abundant opportunities to minister to the approximately 1 500 Scandinavian seamen who called at Durban every year. Finally, knowing that Witt's primary calling was to evangelise indigenous Africans, Gørven emphasised that there were several thousand Zulu labourers in Durban and expressed regret that little missionary work was being done amongst them. Presumably unaware that relations between Witt and the leadership of the SKM had become severely strained, Gørven wondered whether the SKM would consider transferring Witt to Durban and continuing to support him there while he ministered to both Zulus and Scandinavians in the city. He concluded by requesting Witt's permission to contact his superiors in Sweden about this matter.[59]

Apparently Witt perceived in this offer at least a partial solution to his dilemma and thus acceded to Gørven's request. Replying quickly from Oscarsberg, he declared that the call must have been divinely inspired because he himself had never considered moving to Durban. Witt emphasised, however, that he had been commissioned to do missionary work amongst "the heathens" and that it would not

be easy for him to leave his "dear Oscarsberg". He lessened the tension between his original commission and the Scandinavians' call by reasoning that he could focus his attention on the Zulus in the city, chiefly in the evenings when they were not working. Witt envisioned a "powerful revival" thus emanating from Durban as migratory labourers who had accepted the Gospel there took their new faith back to their widely scattered rural homes. He stressed that if he were to come to Durban he could not be under the control of the Scandinavian community there but would have to work independent of it.[60] Presumably Witt thus believed that he and the leaders of the SKM could find a *modus vivendi* which would allow him to remain in that organisation but devote much of his time to urban evangelisation and a lesser part of it to ministering to his fellow Scandinavians.

Gørven, apparently satisfied with this affirmative if qualified reply, in his capacity as secretary of the Scandinavian congregation responded by writing to the SKM in October 1889. He explained the plight of the local church and the need for a pastor to minister to Nordic immigrants, sea-farers, and black labourers. Gørven asked the SKM outright to consider transferring Witt to Durban. He did not, however, broach such vital matters as how Witt would divide his professional time or the extent to which the members of the Scandinavian Chapel were prepared to defray his salary.[61]

In the end the proposed arrangement foundered when Witt unilaterally declared his independence from the steering committee and subsequently left the SKM. The Scandinavian Chapel continued without a full-time pastor, although Witt did in fact move to Durban and preached to its congregation, as will be discussed in Chapter VII. During the early 1890s it split into two autonomous units, one of which continued as the Scandinavian Chapel while the other became the St. Olav Lutheran Church. Witt entered the service of a new, pan-Scandinavian missionary society, the Free East Africa Mission, which evangelised Zulus both in Durban and near Stanger. He thus realised, if only temporarily, his vision of becoming an itinerant evangelist largely free of bureaucratic control. As will be seen in Chapter VII, this proved to be an important stage in Witt's spiritual odyssey, the last stop on a tortuous road which led him away from Southern Africa in 1891.

Notes

1. J.E. Norenius, "Josef Zulu. En livsbild från vår lutherska zulukyrka", *Tillkomme ditt rike*, XXVIII (Stockholm, A.-B. Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1933), p. 40.

2. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, B I : 1, *Utgående Expeditioner 1878-1897*, H.W. Tottie (Stockholm) to O. Witt, 31 May 1886.

3. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, B I : 1, *Utgående Expeditioner 1878-1897*, H.W. Tottie (Stockholm) to Josef ka Mataka, 31 May 1886.

4. Ida Jonatanson, "Johannes (Mamoza) Mtetwa. Vår zulumissions förste evangelist", *Tillkomme ditt rike*, IV (Uppsala, Almquist & Wiksells Boktrykkeri A.-B., 1909), pp. 74-79.

5. "Swenska Kyrkans Missions-Styrelses berättelse till 1888 års Allmänna Kyrkomöte", *Missionstidning*, XIII, no. 9 (1888), pp. 206-207.

6. Anton Karlgren, *Svenska Kyrkans mission i Sydafrika* (Uppsala, L. Norblads Bokhandel, 1909), pp. 208-210.

7. J.E. Norenius, *Bland zuluer och karanger*, I (Stockholm, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1924), pp. 115-116.

8. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 4, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1887-1890*, Henry W. Tottie, "Inspektionsberättelse afgifven till Svenska Kyrkans Missions-Styrelse", pp. 1-2.

9. Henry W. Tottie (Cape Town) to *Missionstidning*, 1 July 1886, in Missionstidning, XI, no. 8 (1886), pp. 177-181.

10. For a keen if biased analysis of this controversy and how it led to Schreuder's resignation, see Olav Guttorm Myklebust, *H.P.S. Schreuder. Kirke og misjon* (Oslo, Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1980), pp. 280-334.

11. Tottie, "Inspektionsberättelse", pp. 12-13.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18, 22-23.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-40.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-85.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-90.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

28. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I : 2, *Svenska Kyrkans Missions-Styrelse Protokoll 1884-1893*, 11 March 1887.

29. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, B I : 1, *Utgående Expeditioner 1878-1897*, Henry W. Tottie (Stockholm) to Otto Witt, 11 March 1887.

30. "Report of the Inspector of Native Education for 1885", *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal. 1885* (Pietermaritzburg, P. Davis & Sons, Government Printers, [1886]), p. U 33.

31. "Report of the Inspector of Native Education for 1886", *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal. 1886* (Pietermaritzburg, P. Davis & Sons, Government Printers, [1887]), pp. U 48-49.

32. "Report of the Inspector of Native Education for 1888 on the Government Aided Native Schools", *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal. 1888* (Pietermaritzburg, William Watson, Government Printer, 1889), pp. U 52-53.

33. "Report of the Inspector of Native Education for 1890 [*sic*] on the Government Aided Native Schools", *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal. 1889* (Pietermaritzburg, William Watson, Government Printer, 1890), pp. U 40-41, U 48-49, U 63.

34. Otto Witt, *Kristus i hedningarne, härlighetens hopp* (Stockholm, A.V. Carlson, 1887), pp. 11, 24, 28.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-145.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-54.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 95.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

42. Ingemar Lindén, *Biblicism, apokalyptik, utopi* (Uppsala, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1971) is the standard history of Seventh-day Adventism in Sweden.

43. Frederick Hale, "British and American Millenarianism in Norway during the Breakthrough of Modernity", *Fides et Historia*, XIX, no. 1 (February 1987), pp. 35-50.

44. Witt, *Kristus i hedningarne*, pp. 13, 131-134.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90, 97-99.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 147-148.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

48. Tore Furberg, *Kyrka och mission i Sverige 1868-1901* (Uppsala, Svenska Institutet för Missionsforskning, 1962), p. 260.

49. "Moody en Sankey", *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode*, XXVII, no. 21 (14 October 1876), pp. 344-346; no. 23 (11 November 1876), pp. 369-372; no. 24 (25 November 1876), pp. 389-391.

50. "Charles G. Finney," *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode*, XXIX, no. 6 (17 March 1877), pp. 87-90; no. 7 (31 March 1877), pp. 99-102.

51. Matthys Christiaan Franken, "Spesiale Evangeliepredikiing in die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid-Afrika, 1876-1945" (Master of Theology thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1987), pp. 10-11.

52. J. du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray of South Africa* (London, Marshall Brothers, [1919]), p. 323.

53. Andrew Murray, "Bijzondere Diensten", *De Gereformeerde Kerkbode*, XXXI, no. 14 (5 July 1879), pp. 217-220.

54. For some details of this campaign, see the untitled notices in *De Kerkbode*, IV, no. 9 (4 March 1887), p. 71; no. 11 (18 March 1887), p. 87; and no. 14 (8 April 1887), p. 111.

55. Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to *Missionstidning*, 18 November 1887, in *Missionstidning*, XIII, no. 1 (1888), p. 4.

56. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 4, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1887-1890*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Henry Tottie, 5 April 1887.

57. According to J.J. Egeland, a prominent early member, the congregation's constitution was adopted on 14 March 1882; see his "Erindringer fra ottiaarene", *Fram*, 1 November 1914, p. 5. The centenary history, however, gives 2 July 1883 as the date; see M.F. Lear (ed.), *The St. Olav Lutheran Church 1880-1980* (Durban, Unity Publications, 1980), p. 15.

58. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A I a : 1, *Konferensens protokoll från 1877*, minutes of conference held at Appelsbosch, 27 - 29 July 1889.

59. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 4, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1887-1890*, A. Gørven (Durban) to Otto With (*sic*), 16 August 1889.

60. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 4, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1887-1890*, Otto Witt (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to Skandinaviska Föreningen i Durban, 3 September 1889.

61. Church of Sweden Mission Archives, A II : 4, *Bilagor till Svenska Kyrkans Missionsstyrelses Protokoll 1887-1890*, A. Gørven (Durban) to SKM Steering Committee, 2 October 1889.

CHAPTER VII

WITT AND THE FREE EAST AFRICA MISSION

Introduction

From 1889 until 1891 Witt played an influential role in the Free East Africa Mission, a neophyte pan-Scandinavian undertaking whose activities were limited, despite its misleading name, to Natal. His involvement is significant to both Nordic and Southern African church history for several related reasons. First, certain emphases in the FEAM contribute to our understanding of Witt's relationship to his Swedish Lutheran background, because he left the SKM shortly after coming into contact with the new organisation. One can therefore tentatively assume that Witt found something in the FEAM which the SKM lacked. Secondly, the FEAM was in various respects quite different from the SKM, so a general analysis of the former can shed light on what attracted the disgruntled Swede to it in the first place. Thirdly, the course of Witt's participation in the FEAM and his interaction with its other missionaries reveal an important stage in the evolution of his thinking with regard to missionary strategy, ecclesiastical polity, and other matters. Fourthly, Witt's activity in the FEAM involved a new facet of his evangelism, namely that amongst migratory Zulu labourers in Durban. In this work he was a relatively early pioneer in Natal. Finally, although the FEAM as such did not survive into the twentieth century, it was a seminal departure in Scandinavian missions history, one encompassing relatively new emphases in eschatology, methods of proclaiming the Gospel, and the recruitment and training of missionaries. Yet very little has been written and even less published about the FEAM. A consideration of it, focusing on Witt's role, can be one step towards redressing this neglect.

The Background of the FEAM

The roots of the FEAM, like those of several other Scandinavian free church missionary endeavours, lay partly in the intercontinental ministry of the Swedish-American evangelist Fredrik Franson (1852-1908). A native of the province of Värmland, he emigrated with his family to the American Midwest in 1869 and spent several years on farms in Kansas and Nebraska. In the early 1870s Franson suffered a serious illness and, almost simultaneously, endured a spiritual crisis which eventually led to a conversion experience. Though baptised a Lutheran in Sweden, he then joined a Swedish immigrant Baptist church. This change of affiliation does not appear to have been particularly consequential, however, and at no time does Franson seem to have been at all concerned about denominational labels or institutional affiliations.[1]

Far more significant and immediately relevant to the eventual founding of the FEAM was the course which Franson followed as an evangelist in the United States of America during the latter half of the 1870s. He apparently left Nebraska in 1875 or 1876 and spent several months in Philadelphia and New York in connection with the evangelistic campaigns of Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) and Ira D. Sankey (1840-1908), who had recently returned from the British Isles. The young Swede then co-operated with Moody in Chicago until 1877, focusing on outreach to the rapidly growing Scandinavian immigrant population of the Windy City. Franson did not officially join Moody's nondenominational Chicago Avenue Church until August 1878, however, when its executive committee commissioned him as an evangelist.[2]

Franson's affiliation with the Moody organisation left deep imprints on his formative mind. One of these was a powerful eschatological impulse which drove his personal missionary career around much of the world for three decades and contributed to the founding of the FEAM and other missionary societies. As Ernest R. Sandeen and several subsequent historians of Protestant eschatology demonstrated during the 1970s and 1980s, the nineteenth century was a period when various millenarian currents criss-crossed the Atlantic and helped to shape not only theology but also the denominational landscape and local religious life of many European countries, the British Isles, and North America. No general school of prophetic interpretation

made a greater mark than futurist millenarianism, which stemmed in part from the thought of John Nelson Darby (1800-1892), an Irishman who founded the Plymouth Brethren sect. According to Darbyite futurism, the cataclysmic events foreseen in Daniel, Revelation, Mark 13, and other Biblical texts had not yet occurred, and there was thus no way of predicting when the Second Advent would take place. This central tenet set futurists apart from many other millenarians who, for example, identified the beast of Revelation 13 with the papacy or with specific historical figures and consequently engaged in endless speculative calculations trying to determine when Christ would return. Instead, futurists, especially those whom Darby influenced, emphasised the "any-moment coming", by which they meant that the Second Coming would occur independent of the course of world history and that therefore calculations were bootless. Moreover, they believed that Christ would actually return twice, once secretly to remove true Christians from the world ("the secret rapture"), probably before the period of tribulation occurred (although this was a debated point), and again in glory to preside over the end of world history and rule in the blissful millennium.[3]

Franson became a Darbyite futurist by the end of the 1870s, probably owing to the fact that Moody also came strongly under the influence of this school and became one of its principal American exponents. Together with John Gustav Princell (1845-1915), another Swedish immigrant who had been suspended from the clergy roster of the Lutheran Augustana Synod for propagating a view of the Atonement which differed from the doctrine of satisfaction taught in Article III of the *Augsburg Confession*, he was soon a leading millenarian amongst Scandinavian-Americans. These two men were principal speakers at a three-day, nonsectarian prophetic conference which immigrants from Scandinavia arranged in Chicago in 1881.[4] The following year Franson edited the proceedings of this parley for publication in Sweden.[5]

Franson's developing understanding of ecclesiology and his rudimentary theology of evangelism also left their mark on the FEAM and intersected with Witt's beliefs. In brief, Franson emphasised the purity of the visible church but did not propose means of exercising ecclesiastical discipline which might be used in attempts to separate the wheat from the tares. Whether this was due to a belief that it was

ultimately impossible to gather and maintain congregations comprising exclusively the regenerate, preoccupation with writing millenarian treatises, or some other factor is impossible to ascertain. In any case, Franson stressed that these cells of true believers who had experienced conversion should commission evangelists from their midst. He based this on apostolic models and, in accordance with at least part of the practice of the first-century church, emphasised that such commissioned evangelists should be primarily itinerant. Franson was not, however, rigidly committed to ceaseless itinerancy by others, although his own career might indicate otherwise. "God appears to have a rule", he conceded, "that so long as an evangelist can work for the benefit of the unconverted in one place, he ought to remain [there]". In such instances, the evangelist should stress what missiologists would subsequently call "indigenisation", or the development of leadership within the newly gathered congregations.[6] Whether in the mission field or in areas where Christianity had long been established, Franson believed in congregational polity and insisted that the Bible had nothing to say about denominations or administrative ties between local bodies of believers. Intercongregational links should thus be personal and spiritual, not hierarchic or bureaucratic in any other sense.[7]

In addition to these concepts which indirectly reached Natal at the end of the 1880s and which dovetailed nicely with emphases in Moody's organisation, Franson adopted certain evangelistic techniques which he had learnt from his powerful Yankee mentor and popularised them in Scandinavia during the 1880s. The Swedish-American employed a vocalist whenever possible, exhorted his hearers to turn to Christ immediately, held "after meetings" for people so moved during his services, and conducted Bible courses for educating what Moody called "gap-men" to continue his work in specific areas after he had departed. Much of this would also reappear in the FEAM and influence Witt to some degree. Franson went beyond conventional Moody-style evangelism, though, in emphasising the role of female evangelists, some of whom soon gained prominence in several of the organisations whose founding he inspired.

Franson took his theology and evangelistic methods back to Scandinavia in 1881 and soon established himself as one of the first propagators of what might loosely be called the Moody style in northern Europe. After approximately a year and a

half of moderately controversial evangelisation in Sweden, he arrived in Norway in January 1883. Franson spent more than a year there, travelling through much of the country and proclaiming the Gospel, including the awaited return of Christ, in the chapels of various nonconformist denominations and home missionary societies as well as, on occasion, the sanctuaries of the state Lutheran church.

Among the many Norwegians with whom he became acquainted was Paul Peter Wettergreen (1835-1889), a pietistic Lutheran pastor who had served the Norwegian Missionary Society in Zululand from 1861 until 1870. In 1875 Wettergreen, then back in Norway, had demitted his pastorate in the established church and become a leader in the movement which led to the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church two years later. At the time of Franson's first evangelistic tour in Norway, Wettergreen was the pastor of the new denomination's relatively large congregation in the southern coastal town of Arendal.[8] Wettergreen, like Franson, was an avid millenarian and had both delivered and published lectures about the awaited Second Coming.[9] In 1887 he and several other Norwegians and Swedes representing various denominations arranged the first major prophetic conference in Norway.[10] The following year Wettergreen participated in one of the training courses which Franson held for prospective evangelists in that country, and by the end of 1888 the Norwegian pastor, who had left the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church over a doctrinal dispute, had laid plans for a nondenominational foreign missionary venture which would initially operate in Natal. It was this undertaking which in 1889 was constituted as the Free East Africa Mission (*Den frie østafrikanske Mission*).

As delineated thus far, the line of theological and evangelistic influences from Moody to Franson to Wettergreen and to the FEAM may seem tenuous. As will be seen, however, there were additional links, both theological and personal. To begin with, Wettergreen's eldest son, Jacob (1866-1889), and possibly his second, Olaf (1867-1926), attended Moody's Bible school in Mount Hermon, Massachusetts, during the late 1880s. A second kind of personal connection lay in the composition of the steering committee which initially guided the affairs of the FEAM and collected funds for the support of its missionaries. At least four of its nine members belonged to congregations affiliated with the Norwegian Mission Covenant (*Det Norske Misjonsforbund*), a small denomination which had been founded in 1884 in the wake

of Franson's first campaign in Norway and which has always regarded itself as a Fransonian body. Among the four was Carl Pehrson (1848-1912), a Swede who then also served as the chairman of the Covenant. That denomination unofficially sponsored much of the work of the FEAM, and its periodicals provided most of the publicity for the venture in Natal. Eventually, in 1899, the Covenant formally adopted the FEAM as one of its first official foreign missions.[11] The constitution of the FEAM established it as a nonsectarian body under the temporary superintendency of Jacob and Olaf Wettergreen, although the men who framed the document stipulated that any disputes in the field be referred immediately to the steering committee in Kristiania. Before sailing to Africa, the Wettergreen brothers, sometimes accompanied by their ageing father, travelled widely in Scandinavia to collect funds for the FEAM. At the meetings which they held, the two young men used a collection of Christian songs, some of which they had composed themselves. These were subsequently published under the title *Himmelklokken. Salmer og Sange for ufrelste og Opmuntring for Guds Folk* (i.e. The Clock of Heaven. Hymns and Songs for the Awakening of the Unsaved and the Encouragement of God's People).[12] The songs, bearing such titles as "Her er liden Tid" (i.e. Little Time Remains) and "Medens Dagen gaar forbi" (i.e. As Time Passes) emphasised the imminence of the awaited Second Coming and indicate a general indebtedness to the Moody-Franson tradition.

The FEAM Enters Natal

The first party of nine FEAM missionaries left Norway for Natal in July 1889. They were a pan-Scandinavian lot with backgrounds in several denominations. Absent was founder Paul Wettergreen, who had suffered a stroke which led to his death in Norway in August. His two eldest sons, Jacob and Olaf, brought along their Norwegian and Swedish brides, Martha Larsen and Hanna Lydén. Emelie Häggberg (1854-1909), nominally a Lutheran but active in the young Holiness Union, a proto-denomination and evangelistic organisation which had arisen in the wake of Franson's evangelistic campaigns in Sweden but not yet undertaken foreign missionary work, was the only other Swede. She had met Paul Wettergreen at the time of Franson's

training course for evangelists in Norway in 1888. The sole Dane in the group was young Sofus Nielsen (1874-1900), a Copenhagener who belonged to the Danish Mission Covenant, a small communion formed after Franson's brief stay in Denmark. The three other missionaries were Norwegian women, namely Olava Solberg (1849-1891), a Lutheran who had served briefly in the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission, Martha Sanne (1852-1923), and Georgine Ansteensen (1858-1941), who belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church.

The nine representatives of the FEAM disembarked in Durban on 15 August. They became acquainted with Witt almost immediately, probably at the Scandinavian Chapel, where he was ministering temporarily on a brief stay in the city. That small congregation, which would extend a call to Witt a few weeks later, served as the FEAM personnel's first spiritual home in Natal, and the Wettergreen brothers, especially Olaf, conducted part of their ministry in it. The newly arrived missionaries became closely attached to Witt from the outset. Less than a week after reaching Durban, Sofus Nielsen described him as "a pleasant man", and Emilie Häggberg began almost immediately to serve as the ailing Mrs Witt's nurse. The Wettergreen brothers and Häggberg prayed for Elin Witt's recovery on 16 August, and her health reportedly improved remarkably within a few days.[13] This probably helped to cement the relationship between the Witts and the neophyte missionaries of the FEAM.

Their consequential period of co-operation with Witt began shortly after they met him. He recalled in his memoirs that their spiritual union was a close one and revealed that it soon took a form which departed from conventional Lutheran practice. On the first Sunday after the nine landed in Durban, Witt officiated at a private communion service with them in a house which they had hired. This appears to have been the first time Witt administered this sacrament without the well-rehearsed Swedish Lutheran liturgy. "I had never done anything like that before", he wrote about the occasion. "I knew only the ecclesiastical communion procedure with hosts, so I went to their meeting with fear and trembling". The sacrament proved to be a powerful spiritual experience for Witt, who described himself as feeling like a risen Lazarus. "Full of the holiest rapture, I fell to my knees and wept in a way I had not done since I was a child".[14]

At that time Witt was still formally attached to Oscarsberg, despite his temporary presence in Durban and his increasing involvement in itinerant evangelism on both sides of the Buffalo River. As the FEAM missionaries, only one of whom (Olava Solberg) could speak Zulu, intended to found a rural station, it was deemed advisable for some of them to visit Witt's station in order to gain some initial familiarity with that kind of missionary endeavour. Before they left Durban, Olaf Wettergreen's wife died in what was variously interpreted as a suicide or a murder. Her body was found washed ashore on an island in the harbour.[15]

Undaunted by this shocking event, the first of several which depleted the ranks of the FEAM, the Wettergreen brothers, Nielsen, and Häggberg accompanied the Witts back to Oscarsberg at the end of August.[16] From the perspective of the new missionaries, Witt was a powerful and effective preacher. Although they understood virtually nothing of what he proclaimed in Zulu to his congregation at the station, Olaf Wettergreen was bold enough to report that "Pastor Witt works not only to get the Kaffers somewhat suited and willing to be baptised, but also to be truly born again by God's spirit". On the second Sunday of the visiting missionaries' stay at Oscarsberg, fifteen Zulus rose during the service and announced that they had accepted Jesus as their saviour. Whether these people were seasoned members who were giving testimonies or recent converts is impossible to ascertain. In any case, the worship which the Wettergreens, Häggberg, and Nielsen witnessed at Oscarsberg convinced them of the desirability of further co-operation with Witt and that general emulation of his methods would advance their own undertaking.[17]

This brief, initial period of co-operation was interrupted when the FEAM missionaries left Oscarsberg to search for a site on which they could establish their own station. Owing in part to assistance from counterparts in the Norwegian Missionary Society, they succeeded in finding a farm near Stanger which they purchased before the end of 1889 and called "Ekutandaneni", or place of brotherly love. Witt had suggested this name.[18] The eight missionaries intended to develop a conventional station there and simultaneously minister to the congregation of the Scandinavian Chapel and evangelise Zulus in Durban. This plan, and the division of labour which would have kept Jacob Wettergreen chiefly in Durban, was dealt a severe setback when he succumbed to dysentery in late December.[19] His wife returned to Scandinavia

shortly thereafter, thereby reducing the number of FEAM missionaries to six, only one of whom, Olaf Wettergreen, was an adult male.

By then, however, Witt's departure from the SKM was a *fait accompli.* He had informed his superiors in November 1889 that his theological views were no longer identical with theirs and that he would henceforth devote his ministry to itinerant evangelism. Yet Witt was strongly at odds with the Anglican missionaries across the Buffalo River, who had protested against his work there, and he was reluctant to accept a call to the Scandinavian Chapel, with which in any case the SKM would not have co-operated at that point. To the maverick Swede, the desire of the FEAM to evangelise Zulus in Durban, its nondenominational and nonconfessional character, its lack of involvement in educational or other social ministries, and its specific needs with regard to experienced, male assistance with competence in the Zulu tongue must have seemed to have fitted him hand-in-glove. After Witt's resignation from the SKM, Olaf Wettergreen returned briefly to Oscarsberg in April 1890 to help him and his family move to Durban.[20] There is no evidence or firm reason to believe that Witt ever saw his former station again. Witt's departure, though hardly unexpected, was a blow to the work of the SKM at Oscarsberg. It left that station without an ordained missionary or any other European male. The loss of Witt also troubled Johannes Mamoza, the Zulu evangelist and teacher at Oscarsberg. Martha Sanne, who was there at the time, related how this African protegé, "with the most grief-ridden expression on his face", had told her how disturbing the departure would be. Mamoza had offered to follow Witt to Durban, but the former's wife had prevented this by refusing to leave Oscarsberg.[21]

Witt soon discovered that Durban was a much more expensive place in which to reside than his station had been, and without a salary from the SKM his means were stretched. A small house had been hired for him and his family, probably by people in the Scandinavian Chapel, for ca £7 per month. When Witt tried to pay the rent each month, however, he discovered that an anonymous donor had done so the day beforehand. He interpreted this as a providential sign that he had acted in accordance with God's will by moving to Durban.[22]

Although he was not their formally called to be its pastor, the congregation of the Scandinavian Chapel welcomed Witt in a specially convened Saturday evening

prayer meeting which was reportedly well attended. Wettergreen, who apparently had arranged the service and, as the field superintendent of the FEAM had hired Witt, expressed the hope that the festive evening would launch "an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Natal and Zululand", words reminiscent of what his new Swedish colleague had written to Anders Gorven a few months earlier about his vision of Zulus converted in Durban taking their new faith to their scattered homes.[23]

The FEAM, keenly aware of the human losses it had suffered and its missionaries' almost total lack of experience and linguistic expertise as they struggled to gain a foothold in Natal, welcomed Witt without reservation. Its steering committee published in *Missionæren*, the organ of the Norwegian Mission Covenant, a Norwegian translation of his *apologia* for leaving the SKM. That document is highly relevant to an understanding of Witt's location on his spiritual odyssey in 1890. The explanation is also significant because it differs somewhat from that which he gave in his memoirs more than thirty years later and is thus presumably a more accurate reflection of his theological stance.

Witt began by recounting his spiritual crisis of 1885 during which, he declared, "all my religious views underwent a complete metamorphosis". Specifically, he explained that the understanding of the Word of God which his education had bestowed on him "gave way to a deep respect for the letter of God's Word". Simplifying church history, linguistic ramifications of Biblical scholarship, and a host of other divisive factors, Witt stated that his crisis had led him to the realisation that "the sorrowful fracturing of Christians into various denominations was a result of the human spirit's desire to create on the foundation of God's holy Word theories and systems". This obviously referred in the first instance to Lutheran confessionalism, but Witt thought that other traditions, specifically the Reformed and the Baptist, were equally guilty of replacing Biblical literalism with doctrines of human origin. No more than his fellow Lutherans could they be exonerated of Paul's indictment of the Corinthian Christians, namely of following Paul or Apollos or Cephas and not Jesus Christ.

Witt was not entirely naive about the difficulties which inhere in efforts to interpret Scriptural texts in an entirely objective manner. He conceded that some people might reply to his position by insisting that it is impossible to comprehend the Bible without allowing one's own preconceived notions to influence one's perceptions. Witt's

rejoinder was that Bible revelation was already complete and thus did not require any interpretation. He does not seem to have realised that the literalist approach he had taken during the latter half of the 1880s was precisely that.

Turning from hermeneutics to questions of missionary strategy, Witt repeated his objections to secular education being done as a component of missionary work, although he gave a different reason than he had in his communications with his superiors in the SKM: "To me it does not seem defensible to use the extremely brief time one has for teaching the heathens by burdening their memories with catechetical explanations and ecclesiastical systems, instead of imparting knowledge from the Holy Scriptures". The general practice of emphasising the role of schools at mission stations for *inter alia* reaching young Zulus with the Gospel while simultaneously bestowing on them some measure of European civilisation seemed misdirected to Witt, who reasoned that "the person must be born anew into the Kingdom of God, not educated into it". Besides, Witt generalised apparently unaware of his condescension, "experience shows that the Kaffers are not in a position to bear the education which we try to give them".[24]

Urban Evangelism in Durban

To any missionary interested in pursuing primary evangelism of indigenous peoples, Durban offered nearly inexhaustible and ever-changing opportunities as the nineteenth century approached its end. Though still in many respects a white city at that time, its expanding economy attracted a rapidly rising number of black Africans, chiefly Zulus, after 1870. Indeed, their numbers in Durban approximately doubled every ten years. Digesting census reports, Swanson gives figures of ca 1 800 in 1870, 3 800 in 1880, 7 600 in 1890, and 14 600 blacks at the turn of the century in the city of Durban.[25] According to Natal government publications, however, the number of "natives" in and around Durban was considerably larger. In 1891, shortly after Witt and his colleagues in the FEAM undertook some of the first evangelisation of blacks there, the number of such people in the Borough of Durban and the Umlazi Division was officially put at 22 734, 10 828 of whom were males. To place these

statistics into a more meaningful context, it might be added that at that time there officially resided 12 472 Europeans in the Borough of Durban and an additional 3 054 in the Umlazi Division. The Indian population of Durban was then 5 448 and of Umlazi 6 180.[26] The Africans, or more precisely their cheap labour, played a vital role in the white-dominated economy of the city by the time Witt began to do missionary work there. They were employed in a relatively broad spectrum of unskilled occupations, some of which, like stevedoring and warehouse work, reflected Durban's growing significance as a port. Swanson has estimated that up to 30 per cent of the blacks in the city then served as day labourers without long-term contracts.[27] Most either lived outside the Borough of Durban or were accommodated in barracks near the periphery of the city or in the immediate vicinity of the harbour. Well before the end of the nineteenth century, local officials had taken measures to register these labourers and regulate their conduct to some extent.[28] By virtually any standard, they were unambiguously a deprived, despised, and exploited proletariat.

The extent to which these migratory labourers were active in Christian religious life during the early 1890s is impossible to gauge. In 1890 there were reportedly thirty-two churches in the Borough of Durban. This figure is an underrepresentation, as it did not include the Scandinavian Chapel and possibly other congregations. In any case, nearly all the churches were for whites. Only a small number, such as Christianenberg Lutheran Church with 670 members and St. Paul's Church, an Anglican parish with ca 1 000 on its rolls, were for blacks.[29] Methodists, moreover, had undertaken ministry to them. Yet the urban landscape was hardly crowded with clergymen. In 1891 there were officially only twenty-three in Durban, and another three men and five women who were classified as missionaries or itinerant preachers.[30] Again, however, one suspects that the census may have overlooked some of the men of the cloth. Be that as it may, urban missionary work was clearly still in its infancy in Natal. Witt, who had recently crossed verbal swords with Anglican counterparts over his alleged intrusions into what they regarded as their exclusive field across the Buffalo River, could evangelise Zulus in Durban without concern for comity agreements.

The enormous scope of the endeavour which Witt and his new colleagues had undertaken soon became evident, although it does not seem to have dampened his

enthusiasm or compelled them to alter their strategy. They used several means of reaching the Zulus scattered in the city. Witt outlined his intentions in a letter which he wrote to Johan Plesner of the Salvation Army and the FEAM in May 1890, a fortnight after his arrival in Durban. He pointed out that his house was conveniently located nearly equidistant to three workers' hostels, a walk of about ten minutes to each. A fourth, near the harbour, was farther from his residence. Witt intended to visit each place twice weekly, devoting one of the two hours to "a short speech and discussion" and the other to imparting knowledge of the Bible. His ultimate purpose was a progressive one in accordance with what missiologists subsequently would call indigenisation: "My goal is to win evangelists for the people, taken from their own ranks". Witt expressed a desire to give such men special training for their task and foresaw the possibility of acquiring a small schoolhouse for that purpose. He emphasised, however, that he was opposed to building a chapel for migratory labourers and explained his reasoning: "We shall seek to transform their own homes into small chapels. In every hostel there is a room which can accommodate 100 people, so what more do we need?"[31]

As Witt and his colleagues became more deeply involved in this ministry, the shape of their work began to unfold and conform to a general pattern. During the day they spent much time approaching individual or small groups of blacks in the harbour and on the streets and giving simple presentations of the Gospel. Unfortunately, none of the extant sources sheds much light on this aspect of their evangelisation. Without question, however, Witt played the leading role in this, owing to his extensive experience and command of the Zulu language. Gradually Sofus Nielsen, the gifted Danish teenager who was the youngest FEAM missionary, acquired fluency in that tongue and assumed much of the responsibility for evangelism.

Most black labourers were accessible only in the evenings and on Sundays, so at those times Witt and his fellows were particularly busy. On Sundays they often succeeded in gathering groups of men together for simple worship outdoors. In the evenings, by contrast, these Scandinavians took their message indoors, propagating the Gospel in workers' hostels. Nielsen described grippingly one such informal meeting in a building in which at least fifty black men lay on what he called "shelves" along each wall. He and Witt entered the edifice singing an unspecified Gospel song,

accompanied by a Norwegian woman (probably Martha Sanne) on the tambourine. "As soon as the Kaffers heard the beating of this 'drum', blankets began to rise and heads also began to rise", Nielsen related. "Someone took a lamp, and a moment later more than half of the people took their own lamps or candles and encircled us". The young Dane recounted that while Witt then preached to them in that eerie nocturnal setting, "they sat there like silent walls, listening to the words of life which came down from heaven to give life to the world".[32] Probably owing to the influence of Olaf Wettergreen and, indirectly, the Moody-Sankey evangelistic tradition, Witt apparently became convinced of the desirability of thus employing the musical gifts of colleagues when he preached. Actually, he himself had some musical talent, and as was discussed earlier Witt and his wife had inserted instruction in music into the curriculum of the school at Oscarsberg. For an unknown but probably brief period of time Witt engaged the services of a Norwegian named Ludvig Olsen, who resigned his position in a British trading company in order to serve the FEAM, which he did unofficially.[33]

Accounts of Witt's Sunday services for blacks in Durban are few and sketchy, but Wettergreen left one which provides insights into the informality of their liturgy and the role of music in it. On that occasion, in May 1890, he, Witt, and Olsen went to what he obliquely called the "western barracks" at 9h00 and soon succeeded in gathering a considerable number of indigenes beneath a large tree. First the three Scandinavians sang several songs. Then, after prayer Witt preached on the parables of the lost coin and the lost sheep. "While Brother Witt was speaking a flock of sheep passed by, and he used them as a living illustration", wrote the enthusiastic Norwegian. "Those who were gathered gave him their undivided attention".[34]

One of the things which is conspicuously absent from Witt's own and his colleagues' contemporary accounts of their evangelistic endeavours in Durban is any indication of what they intended to do with blacks who expressed interest in converting to Christianity. Witt and Wettergreen both envisaged such individuals carrying their faith to other parts of Natal and into Zululand, and, with this in mind, the FEAM missionaries proclaimed the Gospel to apparently a fairly large number of migratory workers in the early 1890s. Yet there is nothing about follow-up of any kind, and at no time did Witt indicate that he believed he could form a congregation of black

Christians in Durban. Precisely why this was the case is not clear. The most plausible explanation may be that the FEAM saw very few fruits of its urban evangelism.

Indeed, there is some evidence of discouragement as early as 1891, although not on the part of Witt. Sofus Nielsen, who then divided his time between Ekutandaneni and Durban, commented at length on the hindrances which he and Witt encountered in that city. To be sure, the young Dane was hardly a neutral or mature observer; his remarks clearly bore the stamp of one reared in a nondenominational evangelistic tradition and who was trying to adjust to a culture radically different from his own. They nevertheless help to illuminate the difficulties which faced him and Witt. First, he wrote, many of the urban Zulus to whom he sought to present the Gospel seemed suspicious of nonconfessional missionaries. Even when he and Witt were allowed to preach, most of the people whom they addressed seemed to stare at them with "suspicious eyes", supposedly not believing that missionaries could proclaim Jesus Christ without Biblical commentaries, catechisms, or other aids which may have identified them with a specific denomination. Secondly, like many other perceptive observers of nineteenth-century missions, Nielsen saw a troubling confusion of faith and "civilisation" in missionary undertakings and was certain that the interweaving of the two had influenced many Zulus' understanding of conversion to Christianity. He explained to his sponsors in Denmark that some had begun to call literate blacks *amakolwa* (i.e. believers) while reserving the term *ikolwa kakulu* for anyone who had been baptised. In a flourish of oversimplification, Nielsen placed much of the blame for this on the doorstep of the Trappists who had founded Mariannhill near Durban in 1882, accusing them of overemphasising vocational and liberal arts education at the expense of evangelism.[35] Nielsen's disparaging remarks about educational ministries on the mission field may have reflected Witt's influence, although there is no compelling reason not to believe that the Dane could have arrived at his position without being thus influenced. At that time the Danish Mission Covenant, to which he belonged, was not involved in anything which parallelled the "Social Gospel" in English-speaking countries.

Two final aspects of Witt's ministry in Durban merit brief attention. First, although he refused to become the officially called pastor of the Scandinavian Chapel, he continued to preach to its congregation from time to time, as did Olaf Wettergreen,

who was chiefly at Ekutandaneni during the early 1890s. Whether preaching or not, Witt tried to shoehorn the Sunday morning service at the chapel into his tight schedule, usually after leading early, open air worship for blacks near their barracks and before evangelising other indigenes near the harbour. Part of the remainder of the afternoon, on the other hand, went to visiting Scandinavian ships in port. At that time none of the Scandinavian sea-farers' missions was officially represented in Durban. Witt's ministry to seamen from the Nordic countries was thus a new undertaking, the first of several such ventures there. His work consisted largely of distributing tracts in the Scandinavian languages and encouraging the seamen to attend the evening service at the chapel, where he himself concluded his long and demanding day of worship.[36]

While Witt and Wettergreen were ministering to the congregation at the Scandinavian Chapel, it finally underwent a schism when long-standing tensions between the Lutheran and baptistic parties within it became too great for them to continue to co-operate as one body. Witt's role in this parting may have been a minor one, although it partly mirrored the stage he had reached on his odyssey away from Lutheranism. Sven Eriksen (1854-1925) of the Norwegian Missionary Society, who in 1890 had come from Zululand to Durban to do urban missionary work on a temporary basis, blamed Wettergreen for the discord. He wrote to his superiors in Stavanger that the FEAM leader had baptised eight adults and that several other Scandinavians in Durban were also considering being immersed.[37] The two factions co-operated in celebrating the decennium of the congregation in 1890, but then the rift became irreparable. At the crux of the matter lay the question of ownership of the Scandinavian Chapel. The minority Lutheran faction was unable to prevent the deed to it from being awarded to "the Believers' Church" (*Den Troendes Forsamling*), as Wettergreen's following within the congregation had begun to call itself. Left without a sanctuary, the Lutherans worshipped briefly in an Odd Fellows Hall and called Ole Stavem (1841-1932) of the Norwegian Missionary Society to serve as their pastor. In 1892 they dedicated their own building, which was initially called the "Scandinavian Lutheran Church" but later re-named St. Olav Lutheran Church. The final schism and the initiation of the period with the two Nordic immigrant congregations in Durban both took place during Witt's stay in the city, and clearly his sympathies and involvement were on the non-Lutheran side. Yet it would be

unjustified to attribute to him the causes of this state of affairs, which largely antedated his arrival in the city and appear to have been accentuated by Wettergreen's ministry while Witt focused his own attention primarily on the evangelisation of Zulu labourers and Scandinavian sea-farers.

Rural Evangelism in the FEAM

After moving to Durban in April 1890, Witt spent most of the next year and a half there, where his wife received medical care and his children attended school while he conducted the various parts of his bilingual ministry. But he also assisted his colleagues in the FEAM as they established their new station near Stanger and undertook the evangelisation of rural Zulus near it. Indeed, as early as June 1890 Witt was briefly at Ekutandaneni. He and his colleagues held a series of evangelistic meetings at the station, and the response which their preaching elicited seemed promising. Witt wrote to sponsors of the FEAM in Norway that "at every one of the free meetings we have arranged, several people have cast themselves upon the rock of salvation, Jesus, and confessed that he had taken away the guilt which weighed upon their hearts".[38]

Considered in the context of Witt's hostility to mission stations, his involvement at Ekutandaneni is at least partly anomalous and not entirely comprehensible. It seems most plausible that he and Wettergreen planned to use Ekutandaneni as little more than a staging area for itinerant evangelism in the vicinity and, to the extent that it was agriculturally productive, as a farm whose produce would supplement the financial support which the FEAM was receiving from Scandinavia. That it soon became a conventional station was impossible for Witt to foresee.

The form which much of these two missionaries' rural evangelism eventually took indicates that Witt's activity at Ekutandaneni itself was very limited and that he did not compromise his vision of itinerant proclamation of the Gospel. In January 1891, after several months in Durban, Witt returned to the station, and the following month he and Wettergreen set out from it on a lengthy and trying evangelistic tour.

The latter's account of this undertaking helps to illuminate what he and Witt preached and how they sought to conduct their free-lance missionary work.

Millenarianism seems to have lain at the heart of their proclamation. "Our special testimony", wrote Wettergreen, "was 'the Lord is coming; the crucified and risen Saviour will soon be revealed in the clouds with power and glory'". He did not indicate how he and Witt interpreted such contemporary eschatological issues as the pretribulationist rapture or the presence of "signs of the times" which millenarians in Europe, the British Isles, and North America were discussing in countless treatises and at prophetic conferences. When curious Zulu hearers responded by posing such questions as "When is the king coming?" or "What does he look like?" or "Is he an *umhlungu*?", Witt and Wettergreen conceded that they did not know when Christ's return would occur but declared that "he looks like the sun and is therefore far above both blacks and whites". According to Wettergreen, their scattered audiences found these answers satisfactory.

Witt and Wettergreen got mixed receptions as they wandered north towards the Tugela River. At an American mission station near Mapumulo where, according to the Norwegian, there were already many Zulu Christians and "life was more important than form", Witt preached at five specially arranged services and found an enthusiastic response. A few days later, however, the two men encountered open hostility and other tribulations. Wettergreen related how he and Witt had entered a kraal one evening "tired and hungry", but "the people accepted neither us nor our message; indeed, they turned us away almost in anger". Sent away as night fell, the itinerant Scandinavians were fortunate enough to be invited to sleep at the next kraal they found. They thus spent the night in a hut with another man, three women, three children, and a calf. "The children had whooping cough and entertained us almost all night with their alternating crying and coughing", wrote Wettergreen dejectedly. In the morning the two missionaries divided a chicken with their hosts. This was their last real meal until the afternoon of the following day. Shortly thereafter Witt and Wettergreen were again caught outdoors as the sun set. Lacking a tent, they simply slept on the ground near the Tugela. "It was a bit uncomfortable to think that we were lying only about six or seven metres from the home of the

crocodiles", Wettergreen admitted. In the morning their meagre breakfast consisted of a cup of cocoa.[39]

It is impossible to gauge or even guess how effective Witt and Wettergreen believed their itinerant evangelism near Ekutandaneni and in the valley of the Tugela River was in 1891. Undoubtedly this endeavour corresponded closely to the form which the Swede believed his missionary calling should take. Yet he wrote virtually nothing about it. His Norwegian counterpart eventually abandoned rural evangelism following many discouraging experiences with it after Witt had left Natal. On a Sunday in June 1892 Wettergreen returned to Ekutandaneni after a brief tour on which he had proclaimed the Gospel at several kraals muttering that "one might just as well preach to stones as to the Kaffers".[40] Whether Witt ever felt equally frustrated about his evangelism is a question which can probably never be answered. In any case, he continued to advocate and participate in extra-ecclesiastical and itinerant evangelism for the remainder of his stay in Natal and after returning to Scandinavia.

The 1891 FEAM Declaration of Independence

Witt was undeniably an enormous asset to the neophyte missionaries in the FEAM, both in Durban and at and near Ekutandaneni. It is conceivable that without his timely assistance their undertaking would not have led to the founding of a single station or to evangelisation in Durban. Nevertheless, Witt eventually proved to be nearly as great a hindrance to the work and prosperity of the FEAM as he initially was a stimulus to it.

As noted in Chapter VI, Witt argued in his treatise of 1887, *Kristus i hedningarne, härlighetens hopp*, that foreign missionary work should be an ecclesiastical function, and that regardless of whether churches or voluntary societies commissioned people to propagate the Gospel abroad they should maintain close relations with their personnel. Having little confidence in the viability of missionary endeavours undertaken independently of sponsoring agencies, he had declared unambiguously in 1887 that "we do not believe that a free mission can endure". During the next four years, however, Witt underwent a continuing spiritual transition, changed his missionary

strategy, resigned from the SKM and in effect Swedish Lutheranism generally, moved to Durban, and entered the service of a very loosely constituted, nondenominational missionary society. Somewhere along the way, or perhaps gradually during that quadrennium, he did a *volte-face* in his views of relations between missionaries and their sponsors. In brief, Witt's increasing hostility to denominations, stemming from his inability to harmonise them with the Biblical depiction of the apostolic church, led him to question to legitimacy of virtually all bureaucratic structures in a Christian context, especially when he perceived in them a threat, however distant or ambiguous, to unfettered itinerant evangelism.

This new attitude inevitably had consequences for the FEAM. When Witt went to Ekutandaneni in January 1891, some eight months after beginning to serve that organisation, he discussed with several of his colleagues their relationship to the steering committee in Kristiania. Precisely what triggered this is uncertain, although it may have been dissatisfaction with the tardiness of the committee in sending them sorely needed funds, as we shall see shortly. In any case, Witt, Wettergreen, Häggberg, Sanne, Nielsen, and Ansteensen declared their independence from the steering committee and duly informed its members of this action. After studying the Scriptures, they explained in an accompanying statement, they had concluded that they had "followed an incorrect principle and thereby been recognised as an organised mission". These six missionaries neither indicated which Biblical texts had determined their decision nor specified which "incorrect principle" they had hitherto accepted, but the influence of Witt's anti-bureaucratic thinking radiates through their statement. They expressed their belief that "Christ himself wants to be our head and lead and direct our work. . .". Going beyond what could be traced to Witt's earlier writings, the FEAM personnel applied the last-named tenet of their ecclesiology to their relationship to their supporters in Scandinavia: "He [i.e. Christ] has told us that we shall hereafter be in direct contact with all, whether they are individual persons or small groups". They emphasised that they were continuing to evangelise at both Ekutandaneni and Durban and implored their sponsors to send contributions directly to them - not via the steering committee in Kristiania - in amounts not exceeding £10. The missionaries also informed potential donors that "as was the case in the early church,

we own everything jointly, so that none of us regards gifts as private property; without exception all means will be used to defray common expenses".[41]

In Kristiania the committee accepted without recorded protest or comment the decision of their missionaries. Apparently regarding themselves as no longer relevant, the members dissolved the committee in March 1891. In their last official action, they urged supporters of the FEAM to continue to contribute funds so that "the missionaries will not only have enough for themselves but also be in a position to receive additional colleagues".[42] The calm response of the committee may be more understandable if the account of its secretary, Mathias Hansen, is correct. In a detailed report of the first ten years of the FEAM's activities, he asserted that Chairman Johan Plesner must shoulder the primary responsibility for allowing the breach to develop. Plesner had allegedly failed to send collected funds to Natal promptly, although on at least one occasion the missionaries had informed him that their financial situation was precarious. Hansen added, however, that Witt was also to blame for inducing his colleagues to take an extremely anti-church position.[43]

It would not be accurate, though, to assume that by January 1891 Witt had succeeded in bringing his fellow FEAM missionaries completely under his sway or that he permanently shaped their policies. Differing attitudes towards educational work illustrate this most lucidly. The FEAM was not created to engage in that kind of ministry, and nothing in the extant writings of any of the Wettergreens involved or in those of the steering committee's members suggests that they foresaw such endeavours in the field. Nevertheless, by 1889 all three of the Scandinavian missionary societies which had undertaken work in Southern Africa (the Norwegian Missionary Society, the Church of Norway Schreuder Mission, and the Church of Sweden Mission) operated schools at some of their stations. It is thus not surprising that Olava Solberg wrote from Natal late in 1889 that it was important to build a schoolhouse in Durban and to teach Zulus there to read the Bible.[44] This was never done, possibly owing to a lack of interest on the part of Olaf Wettergreen and to Witt's hostility to the idea. As will be seen in the concluding section of the present chapter, however, the remaining FEAM personnel began educational work at Ekutandaneni shortly after Witt's departure from Natal.

The Continuing Evolution of Witt's Thought

Witt apparently wrote very little during his year and a half of active association with the FEAM. This is entirely understandable when one considers how demanding his schedule as an urban and rural itinerant evangelist was during the early 1890s. Nevertheless, to the limited extent that Witt recorded his thoughts at that time, it is evident that his theological and missiological views continued to evolve, probably owing partly to the influence of Olaf Wettergreen. This is not to say that Witt left behind all evidence of his Lutheran background when he joined the FEAM. On the contrary, after thus affiliating he could still write that "the sin which God wants us to confess does not consist of doing individual sinful acts, even though these often plague the conscience. Rather, sin means that we have turned our backs to God and now wander in darkness towards the rejection of his truth". That truth, Witt declared, is Jesus, and "Jesus is the door as well as the way which leads to the goal. It is therefore the Gospel and not the Law which we are to lay before the heathens . . .".[45] This is fully in harmony with the Lutheran doctrine of justification which Witt had learnt in Sweden nearly three decades earlier, although of course many non-Lutheran Christians could also subscribe to it.

Perhaps nowhere than with regard to missionary motivation did Witt comment more clearly or reveal new impulses in his thinking during the early 1890s. In a sermon which he preached at the Scandinavian Chapel in 1890 (one of his few recorded homilies), he answered at length the question, "How is a missionary called?" Witt took to task those who held the widely accepted notion that men and women who proclaimed the Gospel abroad should do so because they loved Christ. Even more pointedly, he rejected the belief that love of "the heathens" was adequate motivation. "You can go out enthusiastically and full of love for the heathens, but they turn their backs on you", Witt warned his immigrant audience. "When one disappointment follows another, . . . and your love is gone, you become feeble and discouraged". Instead of love, which Witt recognised as a transitory and subjective human response, he emphasised that "obedience and nothing else" was the proper reason for propagating the Gospel overseas.[46] Curiously enough, he did not mention the Great Commission, the *locus classicus* of missionary obedience, in this sermon.

Witt subsequently wrote about another motive which was stimulating his missionary work, namely millenarianism. As mentioned earlier, by February 1890 he and Wettergreen were placing primary emphasis on the imminent return of Christ when they evangelised Zulus near Ekutandaneni and the Tugela River. After returning to Durban he continued to stress the Parousia in his preaching and saw in it not only a principal reason for remaining active in missionary work but also a factor which confirmed his commitment to the radical centrality of economical proclamation of the Gospel at the expense of educational ministry. In brief, Witt was convinced that the imminence of the Second Advent necessitated him to devote much of his professional time to proclaiming this engaging doctrine and none of it to educating young Africans for membership in the church at some distant time. Witt was keenly aware of the fact that his millenarianism and resulting approach to missions placed him at odds with most other nineteenth-century missionaries in Southern Africa. "As missionary work is usually done, all emphasis is placed on the young generation, and it is openly stated that hope is with the children", he generalised. "But what will happen if the Lord returns before the rising generation has reached maturity?"[47]

This denigration of educational ministry as a component of missionary work, by then a *Leitmotiv* in Witt's writing, led him into another tirade against schools and children's homes at stations. "Had the Lord given his disciples the task of civilising the world", he wrote sarcastically, "then the present way of doing things would undoubtedly be correct". But at most mission stations "schools are established in which children are raised for the Kingdom of God instead of being born anew into it". As a result of this and the general approach to missionary work of which it was a central part, stations usually accommodated congregations consisting of people who "receive the preached Word, and who externally take on the customs of the civilised world, but it is nothing more than a world with a religious veneer". To substantiate his case, Witt adduced several disturbing facts about moral standards at Oscarsberg which gave readers of the Norwegian religious periodical *Missionæren* a far less roseate impression of that station and the Zulus at it than either the SKM had presented to sponsors in Sweden or colonial educational inspectors in Natal had recorded annually. One of the Zulu teachers at Oscarsberg, he disclosed, "lives in an immoral relationship with his fiancée", while another was a polygamist. Witt

found the statistics of the results of the children's home no less discouraging. Of the thirty-one girls who had resided there, fourteen had run away and another four had been expelled. Witt dared to hope that two of those who had remained at the home had accepted Christ; "the others have returned to their heathen homes and ways".[48] In the light of this attitude and the generalisations he had made about Africans infrequently since first stepping ashore in Alexandria in 1876, his most condescendingly and blatantly racist language about the inappropriateness of educational work amongst the Zulus is not entirely startling: "My personal conviction is that schools and children's homes on a mission field such as ours, among a wild people of nature, are to a great degree inclined to mislead the people, and the little good they might possibly accomplish is vastly outweighed by the opportunity they give the heathens to acquire a nutshell without a nut, a superficial Christianity without any content".[49]

Witt's Return to Scandinavia

Witt's active association with the FEAM and his entire career as a missionary in Natal came to a fairly abrupt end when he returned to Sweden in late 1891. Unfortunately, little can be known about this important step in his ministry. The only significant source which sheds light on it is Witt's memoirs, which were written some three decades later and describe his decision to leave Africa in brief and oblique terms. In the absence of other sources, we are thus compelled to rely critically on his own account.

In relating - and, one suspects, seeking to justify - his decision to leave Africa, Witt emphasised that in 1891 he had a "lame" wife and six young children in Durban. At that time he was forty-three years old. There is no reason to challenge the veracity of Witt's assertion that doctors in Durban urged him to take his ailing wife back to Sweden. What her malady was remains a mystery, however, as it perhaps was to Witt. Lacking money to pay for passages for his entire family, he therefore took only his wife and their two daughters to Sweden, while the four sons remained temporarily in Natal under the care of Witt's sister, who had gone to Natal to serve

the SKM as a teacher of its missionaries' children. The fact that these young boys remained behind may indicate that Witt still entertained the hope of resuming his work in Natal at some point. Further, though arguably weak, evidence of this is his statement in his memoirs that only after reaching Sweden did he come to the understanding that God did not want him to return to Africa.[50] As will be seen in the immediately following chapter, Witt did not instantly cut his ties with Wettergreen and the other FEAM personnel after leaving Natal, although his relations with some people in that organisation were soon strained.

Witt and part of his family arrived in London impoverished, even though financial gifts received in Durban had defrayed the cost of their tickets. When Witt made a pastoral call to a bed-ridden man in the British capital, however, his ministrations were rewarded with enough money to cover the remainder of the voyage to Sweden. Precisely where in that country the Witts landed is unknown and probably irrelevant, although they apparently soon were in Stockholm for some undisclosed reason. Witt wrote that while he was speaking with the headmaster of a school there about his children's education, he became convinced that they should remain in that city. The largesse of several benefactors confirmed this belief. One who owned real estate gave Witt free use of a six-roomed flat for three years, while others contributed furniture, clothing, potatoes, a piano, an organ, and other items.[51] More than anywhere else, Stockholm would serve as Witt's home until his death in 1923. As will be seen in Chapter VIII, however, he spent a considerable amount of time during the 1890s in Norway as an itinerant evangelist while his family remained primarily in Sweden.

Epilogue: The FEAM after Witt's Departure

The FEAM survived Witt's departure and continued to function in Natal until nearly the end of the nineteenth century. Part of its history during these remaining years of its independent existence can be interpreted as a reaction against his brief but momentous period of involvement and is thus significant for a study of his

influence. Moreover, the history of the FEAM is so little known that a treatment of its last eight years is defensible in its own right.

The official reaction against Witt's domination of the mission began quite soon after he left Natal. In December 1891 Wettergreen and several of his colleagues convened at Ekutandaneni to reorganise the administration of the FEAM field. Precisely what was said about Witt at that meeting is not recorded, but it is evident that the remaining missionaries regarded his reforms of their organisation as a disaster and promptly reversed them. Most notably, they sought to re-establish the close ties they had previously had with supporters in Scandinavia, especially Norway. This first involved reactivating use of the name "the Free East Africa Mission", which Witt had rejected as supposedly sectarian and in violation of Paul's injunction in I Corinthians 3. Wettergreen denied that it was a divisive term and defended it as a merely practical one without ecclesiological implications. Turning to the central issue of financial support, the missionaries acknowledged the need of a "central committee" to co-ordinate fund-raising efforts in Scandinavia. They emphasised, however, that they would not look favourably on the resurrection of the defunct steering committee which would have authority over them. This differentiation may indicate that some of Witt's influence survived his departure from the field. Finally, probably reflecting the fact that only two of the remaining missionaries were men, namely Wettergreen and Nielsen, they declared that they were not in principle opposed to the employment of women in the field. They explained, however, that cultural factors made it virtually impossible for female missionaries to serve as evangelists amongst the Zulus. Wettergreen's report of the meeting was printed in *Missionæren*.[52]

The responses of sympathetic readers in Norway indicated that interest in the FEAM was still fairly strong in that country, despite minor controversies in which Witt had become entangled when he toured it late in 1891, a subject which will be dealt with in the immediately following chapter. Mathias Hansen, the Mission Covenanter who had served as the secretary of the original FEAM steering committee, and four other men formed the requested central committee in August 1892. The new body, unlike its predecessor, restricted its activities to the recruitment and disbursement of funds to the missionaries in the field without exercising authority over them.

Meanwhile, Wettergreen and his colleagues partly restructured their work in Natal. After Witt's departure, Wettergreen divided his time between Ekutandaneni, which was built up as a fairly conventional mission station, and Durban, where he served the Scandinavian Chapel and evangelised in workers' hostels and other settings. At the rural station Martha Sanne and Georgine Ansteensen established a school for Zulu children. This endeavour clearly countered Witt's vision of what missionary work should entail, but it remained one focal point of the programme at Ekutandaneni for several decades. In this respect, at least, the FEAM was a fairly conventional missionary organisation.[53]

Personnel problems plagued the FEAM as it muddled through the 1890s with little financial support and a staff which generally dwindled. Most dramatically, Wettergreen became involved with Christadelphians in Durban and was forced to leave the mission in 1894.[54] Shortly thereafter Sofus Nielsen left Ekutandaneni and the FEAM to seek employment opportunities elsewhere.[55] These and other resignations left the FEAM very short of male missionaries for the remainder of the 1890s, although Nils Schaug, a Norwegian, arrived at Ekutandaneni in 1894 and remained in the field for several years. The drought and plague of locusts which wreaked havoc on the economy of Natal during the latter half of the decade also gave the FEAM missionaries headaches without, however, forcing them to abandon the field. As the 1890s drew to a close, the three or four-person staff was continuing to proclaim the Gospel, baptise occasional converts, and teach Zulu children. Most of this work was done at Ekutandaneni and small out-stations nearby. The FEAM did nothing in Durban after 1894.

The independent history of the FEAM ended in 1899. That year delegates to the annual conference of the Norwegian Mission Covenant discussed vigorously whether their denomination, then fifteen years old, should undertake foreign missionary work. Arguing for the adoption of the FEAM was Mathias Hansen, who had corresponded with at least two of the missionaries in the field about this eventuality. Such a move, he contended, would be natural in view of the *de facto* links between the two bodies during the past decade. Other delegates favoured opening a field in China. In the end the delegates voted overwhelmingly to do both.[56] This denomination thus became involved in missionary work in Natal, where it maintained a small field until 1960.

By the time it adopted the FEAM, Witt's name had been largely forgotten in the denomination, and it rarely occurs in what is occasionally written about the history of the field in Natal. This is unfortunate, given the influence he briefly wielded on the FEAM but understandable because the consequences of that influence were so short-lived.

Notes

1. Easily the most comprehensive compilation of biographical data about Franson is Edvard Paul Torjesen, "A Study of Fredrik Franson: The Development of His Ecclesiology, Missiology, and Worldwide Evangelism" (Doctor of Philosophy thesis, International College, 1984).

2. Josephine Princell, "Early Contacts in Chicago", in Roy A. Thompson (ed.), *Fredrik Franson: World Missionary* (Chicago: Chicago-Bladet Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 13.

3. Two of the best and most widely available studies of the history of futurist millenarianism and related eschatological currents, especially in the United States of America, are Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970), and Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillenarianism, 1875-1925* (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979).

4. Franson's speeches about "Antichrist" and "Signs of the Times" were published in Princell's religious newspaper, *Chicago-Bladet*, 8 June and 8 July 1881.

5. F. Franson, *Utförligt Referat öfwer Förhandlingarna wid den för de profetiska ämnenas studier afsedda Konferensen i Chicago* (Kristinehamn, F. Bröström & Kini, 1881).

6. For Franson's lengthy explanation of his ecclesiology, see *Chicago-Bladet*, 17, 24, and 31 December 1880 and 5 January 1881.

7. F. Franson, "Den bibliska församlingsordningen", *Chicago-Bladet*, 31 December 1880.

8. The standard but quite inadequate biography of Wettergreen is C.H. Lund, *Pastor Paul Peter Wettergreens Liv og Virksomhed* (Arendal, Chr. Christensens Forlag, 1890). For the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, see *Kristus er Herre. Den Evangelisk Lutherske Frikirke 1877-1977* (Oslo, Norsk Luthersk Forlag, 1977).

9. Paul Wettergreen, *Opbyggelige Foredrag over Johannes's Aabenbaring* (Arendal, Chr. Christensens Forlag, 1893).

10. Paul Wettergreen and P. Tallaksen (eds.), *Er Kristi Tilkommelse nær?* (Kristiania, A.W. Bröggers Bogtrykkeri, 1887).

11. An indispensable first-hand account of the FEAM's ten-year history is Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 3, M. Hansen, *Tiaarsberetning for Den frie östafrikanske Mission fra 1ste Januar 1889 til 30te Juni 1899* (Larvik, M. Andersens Boktrykkeri, [1899]).

12. Larvik, M. Andersens Forlag, 1890.

13. Sofus Nielsen (Durban) to Petra Nielsen, 20 August 1889, in *Morgen-Stjernen*, I, no. 20 (15 October 1889), [p. 4].

14. Otto Witt, *Märkliga lıvserfarenheter. Minnen ur det flydda* (Stockholm, privately published, 1922), pp. 37-38.

15. Nielsen to Nielsen, 20 August 1889, [p. 4]; Jacob Wettergreen (Durban) to FEAM Steering Committee, 21 August 1889, in *Missionæren*, I, no. 19 (1 October 1889), p. 149; *The Natal Mercury* (Durban), 23, 23, and 28 August 1889.

16. Olaf Wettergreen (Durban) to *Missionæren*, October 1889, in *Missionæren*, I, no. 23 (1 December 1889), pp. 181-182.

17. Olaf Wettergreen (Durban) to *Missionæren*, p. 182.

18. Olaf and Jacob Wettergreen (Durban) to FEAM, 30 September 1889, in *Missionæren*, I, no. 22 (15 November 1889), p. 175; Olaf Wettergreen (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Evangelisten*, 25 November 1890, in *Evangelisten*, II, no. 3 (15 January 1891), p. 3.

19. Sofus Nielsen (Durban) to Petra Nielsen, 30 December 1889, in *Morgen-Stjernen*, II, no. 4 (15 February 1890), [p. 4].

20. Olaf Wettergreen (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Missionæren*, May 1890, in *Missionæren*, II, no. 14 (20 July 1890), p. 107.

21. Martha Sanne (Oscarsberg Mission Station) to unspecified recipient, in *Missionæren*, II, no. 9 (20 May 1890), p. 76.

22. Witt, *Märkliga lıvserfarenheter*, pp. 108-109.

23. Wettergreen to *Missionæren*, May 1890, p. 107.

24. "Fra Hedningeverden. Pastor O. Witts Redegjörelse i Anledning sin Afsked", *Missionæren*, II, no. 8 (20 April 1890), p. 61.

25. M.W. Swanson, "'The Durban System': Roots of Urban Apartheid in Colonial Natal", *African Studies*, XXXV, nos. 3-4 (1976), p. 161.

26. *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal 1890-1* (Pietermaritzburg, P. Davis & Sons, Government Printers, 1891), p. T 4.

27. Swanson, "'The Durban System'", p. 164.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

29. *Blue Book for the Colony of Natal 1890-1*, pp. H 6-13.

30. *Census of 1891. Report with Tables and Appendices* (Pietermaritzburg, P. Davis & Sons, Government Printers, 1891), Table 13.

31. Otto Witt (Durban) to Johan Plesner, 5 May 1890, in *Missionæren*, II, no. 17 (6 September 1890), p. 133.

32. Sofus Nielsen (Durban) to *Morgen-Stjernen*, 24 November 1890, in *Morgen-Stjernen*, III, no. 3 (1 February 1891), [p. 4].

33. Otto Witt (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Missionæren*, June 1890, in *Missionæren*, II, no. 15 (6 August 1890), p. 117.

34. Wettergreen to *Missionæren*, May 1890, p. 107.

35. Sofus Nielsen (Durban) to *Morgenstjernen*, 15 April 1891, in *Morgenstjernen*, III, no. 11 (1 June 1891), p. 39.

36. Otto Witt (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Missionæren*, June 1890, in *Missionæren*, II, no. 14 (20 July 1890), p. 117.

37. *Norsk Missionstidende*, XLV, no. 12 (June 1890), pp. 231-233.

38. Otto Witt (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Missionæren*, June 1890, in *Missionæren*, II, no. 14 (20 July 1890), p. 109.

39. Olaf Wettergreen (Emaulie) to *Missionæren*, 8 March 1891, in *Missionæren*, III, no. 12 (9 May 1891), pp. 90-91.

40. Martha Sanne (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Missionæren*, June 1892, in *Missionæren*, IV, no. 34 (25 August 1892), p. 270.

41. Olaf Wettergreen, et al. (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to FEAM, 15 January 1891, in *Missionæren*, III, no. 6 (20 March 1891), p. 47.

42. "Den frie östafrikanske Mission", *Missionæren*, III, no. 6 (20 March 1891), pp. 47-48.

43. Hansen, *Tiaarsberetning*, pp. 18-19.

44. "Den östafrikanske fri Mission", *Morgen-Stjernen*, II, no. 4 (15 October 1890), [p. 4].

45. Witt to *Missionæren*, June 1890, p. 109.

46. Olaf Wettergreen to *Missionæren*, May 1890, p. 108.

47. Otto Witt (unspecified provenance) to *Missionæren*, undated, in *Missionæren*, II, no. 16 (20 August 1890), p. 123.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

49. Witt to *Missionæren*, June 1890, p. 117.

50. Witt, *Märkliga erfarenheter*, pp. 101-116.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-118.

52. Olaf Wettergreen (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to *Missionæren*, 21 March 1892, in *Missionæren*, IV, no. 19 (12 May 1892), pp. 148-150.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

54. Hansen, *Tiaarsberetning*, pp. 22-24; "Den frie østafrikanske Mission", *Evangelisten*, VI, no. 16 (1 June 1895), p. 7.

55. Petra Nielsen (Ekutandaneni Mission Station) to Cathrine Juell, 28 November 1895, in *Morgenstjernen*, VIII, no. 5 (1 March 1896), [p. 4].

56. Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 13, "Årsberetninger 1887-1936", *Referat fra Det norske Missionsforbunds 15de Aarskonference i Skien 16de - 19de Juli 1899* (n.p., Det norske Missionsforbunds Forlag, [1899]), pp. 73-78.

CHAPTER VIII

CONTINUING THE ODYSSEY IN SCANDINAVIA, 1891-1923

Introduction

The final thirty-two years of Otto Witt's life and ministry consisted of several overlapping phases as he continued on his spiritual odyssey. He spent nearly all of this time in Scandinavia, primarily in Sweden but also in Norway. Witt never returned to Africa or was again directly involved in missionary work overseas. Having cut his ties to the SKM in 1890, he also gradually reduced his association with the FEAM while becoming more deeply involved in proto-Pentecostal movements in Scandinavia during the 1890s. After the turn of the century Witt eventually gained some prominence as an adjunct to the Swedish Pentecostal movement, which traced its origins partly to similar developments in Norway in which he had participated.

This last one-third of a century of Witt's life lies outside the primary focus of the present study but nevertheless merits scholarly attention for several reasons. First, Witt was then a highly interesting and - in some quarters - relatively important figure in Scandinavian religious history whom historians and theologians have neglected almost entirely. Secondly, the development of his theology after 1891, though hardly systematic or consistent, was a continuation of the contours which had been drawn in Natal. Indeed, some aspects of it, especially the unfolding of his permeating subjectivity, were arguably predictable, although as is so often the case the continuities are more readily perceptible in retrospect than they were to some contemporary observers who found Witt's religious thought to be inconsistent and baffling. Thirdly, a consideration of Witt's activities and theology after his return to Scandinavia can enhance our understanding of the controversies in which he had been involved in Natal by placing the latter into a broader context and casting additional light on how his religious thought evolved. And finally, viewing Witt's role in Scandinavian religious movements after 1891 in the context of his entire career can help to illuminate the history of those developments, if only to a minor degree.

It should be stated at the outset that this consideration of Witt after 1891 is not intended to serve as a detailed concluding segment of a biography. Indeed, such a treatment would be virtually impossible, because the extant sources are too sparse to cover adequately many aspects of his ministry or, for that matter, his private life. Instead, the emphasis here is on Witt's involvement in and contributions to several developments in Scandinavian Christian thought and religious life, especially perfectionism, millenarianism, Pentecostalism, and pacifism. Both because Witt was a minor player in some of these movements and because their history in the Nordic countries is even less well understood outside Scandinavia than it is there, we shall devote some attention to those developments in general before turning, where appropriate, to what Witt wrote about them and how in a few cases other free church Christians took issue with his views.

Witt and the Norwegian Mission Covenant

Witt spent part of the early 1890s in Norway while his wife and some of his children resided in Stockholm. One of his initial reasons for visiting Norway in 1891 may have been to resolve misunderstandings between the FEAM missionaries - among whom he still numbered himself - and their primarily Norwegian supporters. The declaration of independence by the FEAM personnel in Natal earlier that year had apparently upset many donors, and the sorely needed funds which the missionaries had requested be sent directly to them instead of to what had been the FEAM steering committee in Kristiania (since 1925 called Oslo) do not seem to have flowed in to nearly the same extent which had hitherto been the case. Some of the men who had served on the committee hoped that deputation work by Witt in Norway would restore confidence in the mission and stimulate a fresh wave of donations. At the beginning of September 1891 Witt wrote from Sweden to his former benefactors in Kristiania that he would first visit northern sections of his homeland, then travel to Trondheim on the west coast of Norway, and reach the Norwegian capital before Christmas. The secretary of what had been reduced to the FEAM central committee, Mathias Hansen, announced elatedly in *Missionæren* that "supporters of the mission

will have the joy of hearing and seeing this dear brother, who has made such great sacrifices to work for the salvation of the heathens in the most Biblical way".[1] On 2 October Witt wrote to *Missionæren* from Haparanda, a remote village atop the Gulf of Bothnia and near the Finnish border, and promised to spend two months in Norway soon.[2] But the high hopes pinned to Witt's visit went largely unfulfilled. As Hansen later conceded in an overdrawn generalisation, "we were wrong and were extremely disappointed by his behaviour, when he judged and condemned everything and everyone who did not fit his theories and who did not recognise him as an infallible apostle". Hansen explained that Witt's "journey through the country therefore did more harm than good for the mission, and upon returning to Kristiania he was even more intractable. We were thus compelled to break off our negotiations with him".[3] These severe words, which match Witt's alleged stridency nearly stride for stride, may be a caricature on the part of an obviously disillusioned former supporter of the dynamic Swede. Nevertheless, they underscore the breadth of the chasm which quickly developed between Witt and his erstwhile allies in Norway.

How did this come about, and what does it tell us about the course of Witt's theology and ministry in the early 1890s? In fairness to Witt, it should be emphasised that he initially made a positive impression on some people in Norway, including Hansen. Witt arrived in Kristiania on 28 November and the following day, a Sunday, preached no fewer than five times there. In these presentations he discussed his decision to become a missionary, his spiritual crisis of 1885, his rejection of confessional theology, and his reliance on largely literalist hermeneutics. Hansen reported all of this approvingly in *Missionæren*.[4]

Nevertheless, a breach soon developed between Witt on the one side and Hansen and others in the Norwegian Mission Covenant on the other. One of the causes lay in a typical lack of tact on Witt's part. A few weeks after arriving in Norway he contributed to *Missionæren* a relatively severe critique of the hymnals used in Norwegian churches. He found four general faults. First, Witt took them to task for allegedly contradicting what he believed were unambiguous, Biblical truths. What particularly irked him in this regard was the presence of an invocation of the Holy Spirit. When one prays in song for the Spirit to descend, he reasoned, one "denies

the precious truth that the Spirit is [already] in us and thereby places oneself in the ranks of the unconverted". Witt generalised that such hymns were of medieval origin and attributed them to Roman Catholic influences. How Catholic pneumatology had yielded this kind of petition, however, he did not seek to explain. It is conceivable that he had in mind the phrase "Veni Sancte Spiritus" from the Tridentine Mass and other liturgical settings. Secondly, Witt found fault with hymns which contained two or more divergent themes. As an example, he adduced one which expressed the needs of congregational life in one stanza and admonished sinners to be reconciled to God in another. To Witt, it was unclear whether such a hymn was for the regenerate or the unregenerate. That the visible church includes sinners who are not reconciled to God was apparently a foreign idea to Witt at that stage, who seems to have thought in simpler dualistic categories of the converted, who were proceeding towards a state of sinlessness, and the unconverted, who were still mired in sin. (That he had moved in the direction of Christian perfectionism by that time is a subject to which we shall return shortly.) Thirdly, Witt criticised hymns which expressed the Christian hope of "dying a holy death". This, he declared, was a "dead hope" without Biblical foundation. Instead, the New Testament emphasised "the glorious promise of Jesus' return to fetch his own". That a Christian could wish to die in the hope of being resurrected at the time of the Parousia does not seem to have occurred to Witt. Finally, he obliquely chastised the linguistic shortcomings of Norwegian hymnals but failed to substantiate his case by giving a single example of unsatisfactory lyrics or possible improvements of the same. Witt did, however, mention that Abraham Grimstvedt (1860-1926) of Kristiania, who had been active in the Norwegian Mission Covenant and other nonconformist movements, was then compiling a hymnal which would ostensibly be doctrinally more sound than those then available. The Swede urged readers of *Missionæren* to submit suggestions to Grimstvedt. He also proposed that a committee be established to ensure that the "hymns are in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Word" but did not specify how he believed such a body should function.[5]

Witt's broadside drew an angry reply from Hansen, who had played an instrumental role in the development of free church hymnody, chiefly as a translator of English and Swedish texts into Norwegian. This prominent Mission Covenant layman

disagreed with Witt about the undesirability of praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit and noted that in Acts the apostles had received precisely that. Hansen also took issue with Witt's critique of supposedly disparate themes being present in a hymn. Taking aim at the example the visiting Swede had given, he pointed out that not all who heard the Word of God preached and who sang hymns were already converted. Such was inevitable; "under present conditions it is impossible to distinguish believers from infidels and have separate services for each group". Hansen conceded that Witt was correct in arguing that Christians should not sing about death as the object of their hope. He pointed out, though, that "nearly 1 900 years' experience has taught us that for the individual the return of Christ during his or her life is an uncertainty" but that the believer could die with the promise of the resurrection given in I Corinthians 15. Turning at last to the unspecified linguistic inadequacies, Hansen found it odd that a Swede rather than a Norwegian had criticised the nation's hymnody on precisely that point. He confessed that his own contribution to the creation of *Evangelii Basun*, the Mission Covenant's hymnal, had been imperfect and attributed this to the fact that he had been compelled to work hastily. Hansen found some consolation in the "almost unanimously" expressed belief of the denomination's congregations that no change of the hymnal was desired at that time.[6]

On another occasion in late 1891 Hansen found fault with Witt's unwillingness to speak about missions when addressing audiences in Norway. Hansen thought he was expressing a widely held opinion in commenting that "it would have been more beneficial for our friends out in Zululand [sic] if Pastor Witt on his tour had taken up the missionary cause and thereby awakened interest in our toiling friends out there" instead of focusing on "his religious conception and his new views of the Kingdom of God". Hansen agreed with Witt's emphasis in a speech about apostolic Christianity that confessional writings and denominations were unbiblical and foreign to the primitive church. On the other hand, Hansen sharply disagreed with Witt's eschatological interpretations of several synoptic parables.[7] To the development of Witt's millenarian thought, however, we shall return later in the present chapter.

Witt was indiscreet in his public remarks about the FEAM, and this carelessness also damaged his relations with some of its supporters. Writing from Larvik in November 1891, a fortnight before arriving in Kristiania, he announced that he and his fellow FEAM missionaries would no longer have anything to do with its central committee in Kristiania, which since the declaration of independence early that year had served largely to publicise the work in Natal and urge donors to continue to support it. Going a curious step further, Witt declared that the FEAM no longer existed. He did, however, encourage prospective sponsors to send postal money orders to Wettergreen in Stanger.[8] This letter was printed without editorial comment in *Missionæren*, which was then published in Larvik. Witt's colleagues in Durban and at Ekutandaneni apparently desired to cultivate their ties to supporters in Scandinavia, though, and thus continued to send letters to that periodical detailing their activities.

These other missionaries, probably once more in dire financial straits, protested against Witt's unilateral action. This prompted him to write again to *Missionæren* and retract his statement of 16 November. "I acted in the firm conviction that I had the full support of my colleagues", he explained, "but I now see from letters from them that such was not the case". Acceding to their request, Witt also promised to appeal for financial contributions, something which he stated he previously had felt unable to do. Yet their divergent views regarding support led him formally out of the FEAM. Witt announced that God had prompted him to resign from it and that he would henceforth "refuse to accept gifts collected for either this or any other mission". But Witt clung to the dream of returning to Africa and emphasised that if it were realised he would "undoubtedly" co-operate with Wettergreen and the FEAM personnel. How he would find economic support for his resumed mission in Natal he did not explain.[9]

Witt's Involvement in Christian Perfectionism

Witt's disharmonious relations with the Norwegian Mission Covenant and with his former colleagues and supporters in the FEAM was only one of the controversies

in which he was embroiled soon after his return to Scandinavia. Before the end of 1891 he also made an impact on a young Norwegian minister who, after coming under Witt's influence, eventually founded a new denomination, though one which did not regard itself as one. This was the group commonly known as the "Free Friends" but later officially known as "the Free Evangelical Congregations" in the history of Norwegian nonconformity.

That young clergyman was Erik Andersen (1858-1938), whose spiritual journey was no less tortuous than Witt's and whose it partly resembled in its later stages. The two men's preparation for and early years in the ministry, however, were vastly different. Andersen was born near Larvik in the southern Norwegian county of Vestfold. Baptised and confirmed in the Church of Norway, he received only a primary school education before going to sea in the mid-1870s. At age twenty-one he underwent a spiritual crisis and had a conversion experience while on a British ship *en route* from Canada to England.[10] The next four years of Andersen's life are unclear, but in 1883 he met the Swedish-American evangelist Fredrik Franson in Kristiansand and, clearly impressed by his methods of proclaiming the Gospel, soon began to emulate them in and near Larvik. Andersen and others whom Franson had influenced then founded an originally independent, nondenominational church in Larvik, which he served as a part-time pastor for several years. By 1888, when Andersen became its full-time spiritual leader, the congregation had grown nearly ten-fold to 150. The church was by then one of the largest in the Norwegian Mission Covenant, which had existed since 1884 and encouraged the affiliation of local bodies, such as that which Andersen led. Whether any of its members made major contributions to the FEAM after that organisation was founded in 1889 is unknown, but its existence was undoubtedly well known to the congregation, one of whose members published *Missionæren*, which served as the unofficial organ of the FEAM. Andersen had achieved a position of relative prominence in the Covenant and had contributed articles to *Missionæren* when Witt arrived in Norway in 1891.

After attending a denominational quarterly meeting in Bergen late that year, Andersen heard Witt preach and was deeply moved by his message. As Andersen's sympathetic biographer has pointed out, what the Swedish evangelist said is unknown.[11] There are clues about its general thrust, however, in statements which

Andersen made in 1893. He remarked then that prior to his exposure to Witt he had found his own sinful nature troubling. Though assured of his salvation, he could not fully accept himself and longed intensely for "complete purity within me, for liberation from the body of death".[12] This probably indicates that by the early 1890s Andersen's spiritual longings were not satisfied by the conventional Protestant doctrine that he was a saved sinner and that he was therefore receptive to some kind of teaching of Christian perfection or at least a much greater emphasis on personal sanctification than either his early nurture in the Lutheran heritage or his subsequent involvement in the Fransonian millenarian revival tradition could offer. Andersen, whose biographer has noted that he had recently experienced familial difficulties and was rapidly losing his hearing, later embarked on a much more subjective course which eventually led to Pentecostalism, as did Witt at approximately the same time.

In a letter to the Norwegian church historian Oluf Kolsrud (1885-1945), Andersen described Witt's role in the crisis which led to the resolution of his doubts about his sinful nature and launched him in this subjective direction. "When Witt preached, I understood immediately that he had what I was seeking", Andersen recalled. After the service he had gone to Witt's quarters and had a long, intimate conversation with him. In the presence of Witt and several other people, Andersen recommitted himself to God and promised to continue to serve God for the rest of his life. The young pastor then experienced what he perceived to be a filling of the Holy Spirit: "An indescribable glory filled my inner being as suddenly as lightning. It was impossible for me to remain on my knees. I jumped up on the chairs and tables. I dare say with certainty that I was filled by the Holy Spirit at that moment. . .".[13]

This was the encounter to which Andersen and his followers made frequent reference as the fountainhead of their movement, known by such names as "the Sanctification Movement", "the Free Friends", and "the Free Free". The details of its history hardly need concern us apart from a few facts which show general parallels and interplay with Witt's spiritual development. Andersen remained in the Norwegian Mission Covenant for nearly three more years, serving as the pastor of a congregation in Bergen and doing itinerant evangelism. He also contributed relatively frequently to *Missionæren* during this period. Andersen's occasional emphasis on Christian

perfection, however, led to strife within the denomination. The flagship congregation in Kristiania, Bethlehem Church, discussed the issue at length at its annual convention.

Carl Pehrson, the chairman of the denomination, implored his fellows to recognise the difference between holiness (*hellighet*) as an attribute of God and sanctification (*helliggjörelse*, or "making holy") as part of God's action in Christians. "In people sanctification is always incomplete", he stressed. "Some believe that the holiness of God's children is the same as freedom from sin, and this belief has led to regrettable errors and many unpleasantries amongst the faithful".[14] The denomination responded to the strife by expelling Andersen and three other perfectionists in 1894.

The exclusion of these men did not end the debate over perfectionism, which reverberated in some Norwegian nonconformist circles for several years and eventually involved Witt. Advocates of perfectionism, who were generally on the periphery of nonconformity, found a forum in *Ild-Tungen* (i.e. The Tongue of Fire), a monthly journal which Sivert V. Ulness (1869-1937) established and edited and to which Witt contributed beginning in 1895. A returned emigrant who had come into contact with Free Methodists in the United States of America during the 1880s, he settled in the western Norwegian fjord country and began to issue *Ild-Tungen* in 1892. That periodical also carried a generous measure of popular millenarian material. Ulness' efforts to start a Free Methodist movement in Norway came to virtually naught, but he became acquainted with Witt and Andersen (the latter of whom was then preaching independently in Bergen) in 1894 and 1895. These two former Lutherans soon became targets of critics who rejected their perfectionism.

One of Witt's sermons printed in *Ild-Tungen* lucidly illustrated his perception of the sinless nature of the regenerate. Preaching on II Corinthians 5:21,[15] he adduced other Pauline texts, including Galatians 2:20 and 6:14, to underscore the vicarious nature of the crucifixion, i.e. that Christians, in Paul's words, "have been crucified with Christ". Proceeding from these metaphorical statements, which Witt interpreted literally, he told his audience that "it is your and my sin which hangs there on the cross" and was somehow thus destroyed. Absent from Witt's understanding of the theology of the cross is any hint that he adhered to the satisfaction theory of the Atonement with which he would have been familiar from Article III of the *Augsburg Confession* and which was still widely accepted in Scandinavian nonconformist circles,

despite the severe criticism which Paul Peter Waldenström of the Swedish Mission Covenant had made of it. Instead, Witt preached that "in Jesus' death on the cross there is an absolute ending of the ungodly life which has deviated from God". Christians' participation in the crucifixion thus not only freed them from their guilt but also made them essentially innocent: "As branches on the same vine, we bear his fruit and reveal the divine power and perfection, which are in him".[16] This is *inter alia* a radical decontextualisation which flies in the face of Paul's emphasis on the essentially sinful nature of all humanity, converted or not. Witt's understanding of God's grace and of righteousness were apparently also much different from Paul's.

His thinking about the end of the Mosaic Law parallelled his view of Christian perfection, as a sermon he preached on Deuteronomy 34 illustrates. In explaining why Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, Witt dwelt on how Moses had vicariously borne the sins of the people whom he was leading and was therefore not allowed to cross the Jordan. To Witt, this did not mean that God was unforgiving and allowed repentant sinners to suffer interminably. The answer, he believed, lay in God's disposal of the Law. The Law had become a curse, a burden to all who could not fulfil it, i.e. the entire people of Israel. When they were about to occupy the Promised Land, it had been necessary for God to exclude the curse from that place of blessing, Witt contended, by placing it entirely on Moses and then not allowing him - and it - to enter. This interpretation was a kind of typology in reverse, one which Witt's understanding of Christian perfection through the atoning death of Christ had obviously influenced. Just as Christ had borne the sinful nature of humanity to the cross, where it had been destroyed for those who share in the Atonement, so had the curse of the Law been placed entirely on Moses and buried with him in an unknown grave east of the Jordan. Witt's sermon also reflected woefully incomplete exegesis in which the Law is identified with the curse of God and apparently excluded from the Promised Land - where, however, it soon cropped up.

Rather than dealing with the issue of redemptive suffering by sinful Christians which his belief in the overarching doctrine of perfection would have rendered difficult, Witt took a more instrumental view of what a Christians can learn from the curse of the Law. Deuteronomy 3 and 34, he declared, illustrate how one must

not seek salvation through works. "Moses and his Law can do nothing but keep people in slavery with a curse upon them. But Jesus redeemed us from the curse when he became a curse on our behalf". Witt concluded with a typically perfectionist, post-Lutheran assurance: "The Spirit of the risen and living Jesus leads us into the Word, and there we are placed face to face with the living God, who takes away our natural feelings and gives us his own spiritual, eternal life, revealed in his son Jesus Christ".[17]

The Unfolding of Witt's Millenarianism

In the immediately preceding chapter it was demonstrated that, possibly owing to the influence of Olaf Wettergreen, by 1891 Witt was keenly interested in the notion of the imminent Second Coming of Christ. Indeed, the two missionaries placed it at the heart of the message which they propagated amongst the Zulus that year. Witt's millenarianism does not appear to have reached a refined stage while he was in Natal, however. But after returning to Scandinavia he soon began to speak and write about this subject, and references to the Parousia began to appear quite frequently in his published work. His lectures, articles, and, later, short book about the Second Coming aroused interest in both Sweden and Norway, and they also encountered some opposition. It should be noted that Witt made relatively few original contributions to the subject; like most of the many other commentators of his day he generally popularised other men's views rather than conceiving new ideas. During the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century many eschatological currents flowed chiefly from British and American sources to the Nordic countries, including, as discussed in Chapter I, a variety of Darbyite futurism in the preaching and published works of Fredrik Franson. Witt was caught up in these streams. His millenarianism, like much of his other religious thought, developed piecemeal and unsystematically over a relatively long time, even though he spoke about it often. He apparently devoted a considerable amount of time to interpreting New Testament texts eschatologically before arriving in Kristiania in November 1891, probably while preparing the sermons he preached on that tour. His particular use of Synoptic parables and

texts in Revelation was both novel and offensive to some of his hearers, especially Mathias Hansen. Witt's understanding of Matthew 25:1-13, for example, departed from conventional interpretations by placing the five wise and the five foolish maidens at the conclusion of the reign of the Antichrist and the beginning of the millennium instead of at the Second Advent. Hansen wondered how this could be harmonised with Witt's oft-repeated principle of allowing Biblical texts to speak for themselves and accused the Swede of engaging in "private exegesis" which distorted the meaning of the text. Similarly, Witt triggered Hansen's critical mechanism by separating the judgement described in Matthew 25:31-46 from that of Revelation 20:11ff. The Matthean parable, Witt believed, referred to what would happen at the end of the Antichrist's reign and immediately before the millennium, whereas that of Revelation 20 would occur at the end of the millennium. Hansen, on the other hand, stressed the unity of Christ's final judgement of humankind. Finally, Witt's understanding of "leaven" in Matthew 13:33 reportedly "caused consternation amongst the faithful" in Kristiania. New Testament scholars have frequently called attention to Paul's use of the term in I Corinthians 5:6-8 as a negative metaphor for destructive boasting and contrasted this with Christ's comparing of the kingdom of heaven with leaven which can make it grow from a small beginning. Witt, however, declared that the kingdom was the three measures of meal and that the leaven hidden in it represented the evil in the world.[18]

By 1895 Witt had systematised his synthesis of his own and borrowed eschatological notions to a considerably greater degree than had been the case in the early 1890s. That year he published privately a short book titled *Kristi återkomst och Tusenåriga riket* (i.e. Christ's Return and Thousand-Year Reign).[19] An abridged version in Norwegian translation was published serially in *Ild-Tungen*, whose editor did not ingenuously indicate its source but stated that he was publishing remarks which had been "stenographically recorded" at meetings where the Swede had spoken.[20]

In a preamble to his discourse, Witt declared categorically that "the truth about the return of Christ and the millennium is clearly and distinctly presented in the Holy Scriptures", an assertion which some contemporary millenarians would have supported but others, and countless other Christians, would have found incredible.

He urged readers to dispense with the views they had previously held and to interpret apocalyptic Biblical texts literally, not to rely on comments which other Christians, including himself, made on the subject. Witt also insisted that it was of the "utmost importance" for everyone to study the passages in question but did not explain why it was so crucial.[21]

The main body of Witt's millenarian treatise begins with a discussion of the importance of the number seven ("the number of the Lord") in the Bible generally and particularly with regard to eschatology. He illustrated this with several Old Testament texts. After digressing into a lament on how the human race had failed to appreciate the significance of this and to keep the Sabbath, he indicated that the number was also a key to understanding apocalyptic passages in the Bible. Curiously enough, however, Witt did little to develop this theme apart from mentioning the seven golden lampstands and seven golden stars of Revelation 1:12 and 16.[22]

Much of *Kristi återkomst och Tusenåriga riket* is devoted to the details of Christ's return and attendant events, which Witt interpreted partly in terms of the futurist millenarianism which Franson and others had popularised in Sweden during the 1880s, though with certain modifications. A synopsis of the stages which Witt outlined will suffice for our purposes. Like nearly all other millenarians, he placed great emphasis on the resurrection of the dead and especially that of people who had died believing in Jesus Christ. In explicating the relevant passages in several parts of the New Testament, Witt sought to adhere to his general principle of literal interpretation. Yet in effect he departed from this at times, falling into several instances of blatant eisegesis, as, for example, using Mark 9:9-10 as one of his proof-texts to demonstrate that there would be two stages in the resurrection. This belief was widespread in popular millenarianism, however, so Witt was not necessarily innovative in announcing that "the first part of the first resurrection will comprise all those who have fallen asleep in Christ and those [living people] who would be transformed upon his coming". Relying on I Thessalonians 4:16-17, one of the *loci classici* for the idea of the "rapture", he stated that the Lord would descend from heaven with the call of the archangel and the sound of God's trumpet to fetch both the deceased and the living Christians. This premillennial interpretation was fairly common in Scandinavia during the 1880s and 1890s, but it departed from the Darbyite

position which Franson represented by not having this "rapture" of the faithful, i.e. their being removed from the world immediately before the onset of the great tribulation, be a secret event, imperceptible to non-believers. Witt then nuanced his portrayal of the rapture by asserting that only those Christians who are "sober and watchful" (among whom he explicitly counted himself) will ascend before the time of woe envelops the world. Less zealous Christians would remain behind and experience the tribulation. "They will be saved", he believed, alluding to I Corinthians 3:15, "but only as through fire". This distinction harmonised well with Witt's belief in Christian perfection. Paul's apocalyptic texts, he declared, "distinguished between those Christians who are still of the flesh and behave according to the flesh, and those who have cleansed themselves of all contagion of the flesh and the spirit in order to live in the spirit".[23]

Meanwhile, not even all those whom Christ will have removed before the tribulation will be his bride. "At a wedding there are not only the bride and the bridegroom, but also a large number of guests", wrote Witt. The "guests" in his illustration "are all who have fallen asleep in the spirit of Christ from the time of Abel until the return of Christ, but who lived a limited life and did not purify themselves from the impurities of the flesh and the spirit". The judgement seat of Christ would thus determine which believers were in the innermost circle of salvation and thus constituted the bride of Christ. "Each and every one will have his life's deeds evaluated, all that he has done, regardless of whether this is good or bad".[24] Again, this hierarchy of salvation, stressing works and not faith, apparently proceeded from the theology of perfectionism to which Witt subscribed. It was entirely foreign to his Lutheran background and, for that matter, departed from much of the futurist millenarianism which was current in the late nineteenth century.

Witt then described what he called "the second part of the first resurrection". This involved people who were left behind and suffered the great tribulation but who only belatedly, like the foolish maidens of Matthew 25 in Witt's exegesis of that parable, had recognised their mistakes and begun to repent. They too would be saved, though only after an unspecified period of suffering.[25]

The unfolding of Zionism in the late nineteenth century and the persecutions of Jews which had led to it triggered renewed emphasis on the return of the Jews to

Israel as a theme in millenarian literature and encouraged many Christians who wrote about the envisaged return of Christ to see in that movement an eschatological "sign of the times". This was in itself a departure from pure futurist millenarianism, whose advocates discounted efforts by historicist millenarians to place past and current events into a chronological framework and, in some cases, then seek to predict exactly or approximately when the Second Advent would take place. Witt remained essentially a futurist, yet he could not resist finding confirmation of his beliefs in what he read about very recent Jewish history. "Such events as the mission which Rabinovich[26] is conducting and the return of the Jewish people to Palestine show us that the time [of Christ's return] is nearly at hand". Witt looked forward to the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, though only after the culmination of Zionism. He perceived foreign governments unwittingly contributing to this process. Convinced that Ezekiel 38-39 referred to Jewish pogroms under the czars, Witt asked rhetorically, "Who does not recognise in the names Ros, Meshech and Tubal: Russia, Moscow, and Tobol?"[27]

Theories concerning the identity of the Antichrist were rampant in Europe, the British Isles, and North America during the nineteenth century, as they would continue to be in the twentieth. To Witt, it seemed self-evident that the pope was the false prophet mentioned in Revelation. Indeed, so obvious was this to him that he did not even believe it was necessary to argue the point. With regard to this and to his general description of how the Antichrist would hold sway temporarily but then be defeated, Witt offered nothing unique or imaginative.[28]

Concerning the final judgement(s) of the human race, Witt still held to the belief which he had expounded in Kristiania in 1891 and which had aroused the ire of Mathias Hansen. The metaphoric separation of the sheep from the goats in Matthew 25:31-46 remained distinct from the judgement of Revelation 20:11 in Witt's scheme, the former preceding and the latter following the millennium. His description of the latter, which would involve "all the Godless, who died without God and without hope since the days of Cain", revealed just as much about Witt's concept of sin as his vision of the guests at the wedding feast had about his understanding of perfection. All would be judged according to the sins recorded in his or her book. "The evil thought, the vain word, the ungodly deed - everything will return to the

person and form his or her character. . . . And the dead will be judged according to what is written in their books".[29] Just as some would be saved by their works, others would be condemned by their transgressions. There is hardly a hint of justification by faith in Witt's eschatological scheme. To the extent that he related salvation to eschatology, the emphasis was almost exclusively on the sanctification of individuals, not on their initial justification.

Witt and the Pentecostal Movements in Norway and Sweden

Witt played a significant if largely unofficial and ignored role in the Pentecostal movements which swept across Norway and Sweden beginning in 1906 and 1907, respectively. That he was caught up in these currents, which soon made a profound impact on religious life in Scandinavia, is not surprising. The great subjectivity of much Pentecostal spirituality, the millenarianism which often accompanied it, the general emphasis on ongoing sanctification, and the simplistic notions of sin which Pentecostals in Scandinavia long expounded all resonated well with chords in Witt's religious thought. Moreover, the timing of the coming of Pentecostalism to northern Europe fit well into the chronological development of his theology and activity as an itinerant preacher on both sides of the Swedish-Norwegian border. Given the contacts which Witt had in both countries at that time, it seems in retrospect almost inevitable that he would soon become involved. Less obvious, however, are the reasons for Witt's almost complete absence from the general historical surveys of Pentecostalism in Scandinavia, an oversight which can probably be attributed to the fact that he spent relatively little time in Norway when Pentecostalism was becoming entrenched there and to the fact that in Sweden the movement came largely through Baptist churches. Witt, though by then rebaptised, was not at that time a member of any Baptist or other denominational church. This lack of affiliation and Witt's severely critical attitude towards denominations which lay behind it not only limited his influence on and involvement in Pentecostalism but also led him to criticise certain aspects of and developments within it. To that we shall return later.

Before turning to the coming of Pentecostalism to Scandinavia in 1906, it is necessary to look briefly at the career of Erik Andersen, Witt's perfectionist friend who helped prepare Norway to receive that movement. During much of the 1890s, as we have seen, Andersen preached freely in western Norway, wrote for Ulness' *Ild-Tungen*, and aroused the ire of C.B. Falck and others in the Norwegian Mission Covenant by proclaiming a perfectionist doctrine of sanctification. In 1899, however, when in his early forties, Andersen moved to Kristiania. He continued to operate as an unsalaried preacher without denominational ties, proclaiming his gospel of Christian perfection and apparently living on the offerings of the people who attended the informal services which he held at several venues in the Norwegian capital.[30]

Early in the twentieth century Andersen cut his ties with Ulness because of universalistic tendencies in the latter's ministry and never again contributed to his periodical, which by then was titled *Sandhed og Frihed* (i.e. Truth and Freedom). As a vehicle for his many sermons and essays, Andersen launched in 1904 his own magazine, a semi-monthly initially called *Det gode Budskab* (i.e. The Good News). This periodical, which soon had nearly 2 000 subscribers (a relatively wide circulation by Norwegian nonconformist standards at that time), gave Andersen's ministry more publicity than had previously been the case, as did the republication in 1899 of his hymnal, *Schibboleth.* The loose, anti-denominational movement which he led lacked an official name, but was then popularly called "The Teachers of Sinlessness", "The Sanctification Movement", "The Liberation Movement", and "The Andersen Liberation Movement".[31] This new thread in the increasingly variegated fabric of Norwegian religious life, as Asbjörn Froholt has argued cogently, was one of several which comprised the early warp and woof of the Norwegian Pentecostal movement.

Witt appears to have maintained fairly close contact with Andersen after the turn of the century, even though he resided chiefly in Stockholm while his Norwegian counterpart was in Kristiania. There were still many parallels between the two men. Both proclaimed perfectionism. Witt could assure readers of *Det gode Budskab* in 1905 "that it is good to be able to see one's self here as God sees us - pure, holy, and beyond punishment, and to discover that this is not merely a theory but something which reality confirms".[32] Both, moreover, were independent preachers who not only eschewed but also denounced denominational labels and structures as unbiblical.

Both were millenarians who awaited the imminent return of Christ. Both had cut their ties with Ulness. After Andersen in 1903 found a semi-permanent home for his ministry at Torvgaten 7 in the Norwegian capital, Witt preached there several times. The Swede also sent lengthy letters and other writings to *Det gode Budskab* until shortly before his death in 1923.

Such was Witt's situation when Pentecostalism came to Scandinavia in 1906. Nils Bloch-Hoell's study of its reception in Norway, which proved to be the movement's first significant gateway to Europe, renders unnecessary a detailed treatment of that subject here.[33] In brief, the central human vehicle was Thomas Ball Barratt (1862-1940), an Englishman by birth who came to Norway as a child and served as a Methodist minister from 1882 until 1907. Much of his ministry was in rapidly growing Kristiania, where he also engaged in Christian social work. While in the United States of America in 1905 and 1906 raising funds for his ministry, Barratt was heavily influenced by the Pentecostal phenomena which he experienced in Los Angeles. Undergoing a deep spiritual renewal, he decided to give up his social ministry and devote his work to bringing Pentecostalism to Norway. Returning to that country in December 1906, Barratt began immediately to hold special services at which he used glossolalia. Significantly, Andersen and many of his followers from Torvgaten 7 were present at these well-attended meetings.[34] Cementing the ties with that congregation, Barratt began to arrange some of his meetings in its hall before the end of 1906. "Brother Erik Andersen is in full harmony with the movement, and many of the people who worship at Torvgaten 7 are now seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit", Barratt reported in January 1907.[35] "Now I Corinthians 14 is being read in Norway as never before", wrote the equally enthusiastic Andersen shortly thereafter.[36] In all likelihood, the interweaving of Andersen's and Barratt's ministries in 1906 and 1907 was what brought Witt into contact with Pentecostalism. Later in 1907 Barratt demitted his Methodist eldership and begun to function, in effect, as a nondenominational, charismatic preacher. He was rebaptised in 1913, and in 1916 he formally left the Methodist Church and founded in Kristiania the first Pentecostal congregation in Norway, Filadelfia, where he ministered for the rest of his life.

News of what was called "the Barratt awakening" soon spread through journalistic channels beyond nonconformist circles in Kristiania to the general public there and, within days, to other parts of Norway and into Sweden and Denmark. The public received what probably struck some people as a sensational portrayal of Barratt's meetings and their results. *Aftenposten* (i.e. The Evening Mail), for example, one of the leading dailies in the Norwegian capital, devoted much of its front page of 6 January to these phenomena. "A peculiar religious movement of intense power is currently sweeping across the city", readers were told. "This movement, like all movements of its kind, has caused a great deal of hysteria. . .". Barratt did little to counter the sensationalistic depiction when he announced in an interview that there were already at least twenty people in Kristiania who had the gift of tongues and that he expected hundreds of others to acquire it.[37]

Swedish journalists probably learnt of this outbreak through the Norwegian press. Although the political union of the two countries had been dissolved in 1905, they maintained close cultural contacts on many levels, and the high degree of similarity of the national languages facilitated communication between them. It is therefore hardly surprising that newspapers in Stockholm soon began to carry reports of Barratt's meetings. By early January 1907 Swedish journalists had begun to arrive in Kristiania to report the religious phenomena about which they had heard in that city. The first significant account in the Swedish press may have been that which the prominent Stockholm daily *Dagens Nyheter* (i.e. Daily News) carried on 7 January. Its reporter described Barratt's "revival" as consisting essentially of "hysteria, excessive excitement, and glossolalia". He referred to accounts in Norwegian newspapers of such bizarre phenomena at Barratt's meetings as psychosomatic illnesses and women barking like dogs. Much of the two-column story, however, consisted of an interview with Barratt, who emphasised that enemies of his innovative ministry were responsible for the most sensational descriptions of it. The Norwegian Methodist was allowed, in effect, to tell readers of *Dagens Nyheter* what he wished about the advent of Pentecostalism in Kristiania with apparently little editing of his remarks. Yet Barratt made comments which probably gave readers in Stockholm no less sensational an impression than their counterparts in the Norwegian capital had received only a few days earlier. Much of this concerned glossolalia. Barratt

insisted that the Holy Spirit had empowered him to speak not only Welsh (which he could recognise) but also Italian and French, the last-named language thus identified only because it sounded "nasal" to him. A man had spoken four languages at one of Barratt's meetings, one of which was unaccented English. Barratt repeated the comment he had made in the Norwegian press that some twenty residents of Kristiania already had the gift of glossolalia and that he expected hundreds more to have it soon. On the other hand, Barratt denied emphatically rumours that he believed in or practised spiritism, and he explicitly refused to engage in millenarian speculation. Furthermore, he soberly explained that he believed Pentecostalism was "a revelation from God to awaken us from formalism and rationalism". The unidentified Swedish reporter's last few paragraphs also may have counteracted the lurid tone of his opening remarks somewhat. He admitted that no-one had spoken in tongues at the meeting which he had attended and added that none of the other journalists with whom he had spoken in Kristiania had witnessed glossolalia, either. Moreover, this journalist quoted one of Barratt's colleagues who asserted that the English-born Methodist, whom he had known for fifteen years, was not a fanatic. Nevertheless, the article could hardly have failed to convey the impression that something radically different was afoot on the religious stage of Norway and that the charismatic currents evident there might reasonably be expected to reach Sweden soon.[38]

Similar tones pervaded the accounts of "the Barratt revival" which appeared in other newspapers in Stockholm early in 1907. A correspondent for *Svenska Dagbladet* (i.e. The Swedish Daily), for example, used the terms "fanaticism" and "mysticism" loosely to describe the movement. He did, however, seek to relate its participants to their social and economic background, generalising that they tended to come from the lower middle class and the relatively prosperous ranks of the working class. This correspondent also sought to portray the reception of Pentecostalism in Norway as a phenomenon related to the popular demands for independence which had led to the dissolution of the country's union with Sweden nearly two years earlier. In contrast to *Dagens Nyheter*'s man in Kristiania, he had heard glossolalia there and described how three people had used it at a meeting he had recently attended. Softening his moderately sensational depiction of Pentecostalism, however, he wrote

that in Kristiania the movement had already begun to lose some of its extreme manifestations or at least appear in more subtle forms.[39]

Before the end of January 1907 Pentecostalism had begun to spread into Sweden, generally pursuing an eastward course which led to Stockholm by early February. The Swedish daily press, which usually had relatively little to say about religious matters, followed its advance quite carefully, at times describing it in almost epidemiological terms. On 28 January, for example, *Dagens Nyheter* reported an outbreak of glossolalia in Skövde, a town sandwiched between the Vänern and Vättern lakes and south of Örebro. This was a region where Swedish Baptists were quite strongly represented, a significant fact because in Sweden, in contrast to Norway, Pentecostalism made a strong impact on that particular cluster of nonconformist denominations. The anonymous writer of the account in *Dagens Nyheter* pointed out how several Baptist pastors were becoming involved in the new movement.[40]

On 2 February readers of *Dagens Nyheter* learnt that "glossolalia, which has awakened so much attention in Kristiania and Västergötland, has now also reached Stockholm". A Methodist woman had spoken in tongues on several occasions, and a prominent pastor in her denomination, John Adolf Hurtig (1868-1941), had lent credence to the incidents by testifying to the uprightness of her character.[41] A fortnight later the same newspaper reported that the "religious excesses" which had accompanied Pentecostalism to Kristiania, Skövde, Örebro, and Arvika were being manifested several times a week in the Swedish capital, chiefly at Saint Paul's Church. All the journalistic emphasis was on glossolalia; other characteristics of the movement received at most short shrift. There was no consensus on the sound of the ecstatic speech which took place. Some observers denigrated it as ostensibly resembling Finnish, although one reporter countered that perception by remarking condescendingly that "to one who cannot understand Finnish both languages sound equally barbarian, but that is probably the only similarity".[42] This typified the general public attitude towards the suspect new religious movement at that time, while Otto Witt was residing principally in Stockholm and working as an independent, itinerant evangelist.

How did Witt respond when Barratt's charismatic ministry began to gain wide and often sensationalised publicity in both the Norwegian and Swedish capitals early in 1907? Witt's friendship and affinity with Erik Andersen, who was then co-operating

closely with Barratt, made it nearly inevitable that Witt would soon be informed about this new development in Kristiania, as did the coverage it received in the Swedish press. Precisely how well prepared Witt was for the radical new direction in Christian spirituality evident in Norway, however, is impossible to ascertain. Not nearly enough from his hand has survived to make that possible. Yet there are indications that his own spirituality had gone beyond a belief in perfectionism in a direction which made him even more receptive to Pentecostalism than otherwise would have been the case.

One of the few indications of this is a sermon on healing which Witt preached in 1897, ten years before Barratt became known in Sweden. Titled "The Healing Word" and published in *Ild-Tungen*, it sheds light on Witt's understanding of one of the charismata which would soon be associated with Pentecostalism. Commenting on Acts 3, he declared that when Peter and John had encountered a lame man at the temple in Jerusalem, the name of Jesus had healed him. Witt carefully pointed out that the proclamation of Jesus' name and the man's acceptance of it had made him well. There is no indication that Witt ascribed extraordinary spiritual gifts to the two apostles as such. On the contrary, he paraphrased Peter in Acts 3:12: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?" Relating Acts 3 to his own time, Witt insisted that neither he himself nor other Christians were endowed with the power to heal supernaturally, but that it was a question of God's gift and the believer's reception of it.[43]

Witt is not known to have practised faith healing in Scandinavia during the nineteenth century or, for that matter, at any time before Barratt went to Stockholm, although there is no reason to exclude the possibility that he did so. But Witt evidently had engaged in this dimension of ministry during the last phase of his second stay in Southern Africa. After returning to Durban from his evangelistic tour of the Tugela Valley with Olaf Wettergreen in 1891, he wrote that at one kraal they had encountered a Zulu girl who was bedridden with lower abdominal pains. The two missionaries had laid hands on her and prayed for her health. She had recovered shortly thereafter and walked home.[44] No other unambiguous instances of Witt's participation in such healing appear to be recorded. When he addressed the annual conference of

the Holiness Union in Sweden in 1894, however, he emphasised that the Gospel was "medicine for the entire body". The only example which Witt adduced from his career in Africa involved a Zulu man who had been lame for half a year but had become well again three days after accepting the Gospel. Witt did not clarify what his own role had been in this particular case.[45] His descriptions of these two cases suggest that they were at most marginal phenomena in his ministry at that stage. Clearly he approved of healing as early as 1891, but there is no evidence that he engaged in it frequently until at least several years after his return to Scandinavia, and even then he is not known to have used this gift often. It should also be pointed out that at no time is Witt known to have ascribed special spiritual powers to his own person in this regard; in his few references to healings he cited the healing strength of the Gospel and of faith in it. It is highly plausible that he prayed for the recovery of ill people who turned to him for assistance. In this regard it is pertinent to mention that Sweden had several relatively prominent faith-healers at the time of Witt's residence in Stockholm, none better known than Fredrik August Boltzius (1836-1910), who also lived chiefly in that city. But Witt was not one of them before the advent of Pentecostalism.

More than healing or any other phenomenon, glossolalia drew attention to Pentecostalism during its initial phase in Scandinavia and aroused controversies between critics and defenders of that behaviour. Witt predictably placed himself in the latter camp. Indeed, before the end of 1907 he was at its forefront, chiefly through the publication of his book *Tungomålstalandet och öfriga andens gåfvor i Bibelns ljus* (i.e. Glossolalia and Other Gifts of the Spirit in the Light of the Bible). Witt explained in his opening paragraph that in what he called "the believing churches" of Sweden there had occurred "the most peculiar phenomena" in recent months, such as trances, visions, spasmodic movements, glossolalia, and beautiful singing by people who previously had not possessed noteworthy musical talent. Witt did not find it strange that some people had condemned these occurrences and, falling into another of the generalisations so characteristic of his rhetoric, he declared that everyone must sooner or later make a decision either in favour of or against them.[46]

In harmony with his principle of trying to find answers to theological questions through a literal interpretation of Biblical texts, Witt turned to the New Testament

for verbal weapons in his defence of the charismata. He did not seek to present a well-developed pneumatology but focused his attention instead on the relationship of Pentecost to his understanding of the Holy Spirit in general. This truncated approach led him out on doctrinally thin ice. Witt asserted that John 7:39 had been translated incorrectly, because the word usually rendered "given" is not found in the Greek texts.[47] In other words, Witt believed that the true meaning of the passage is that the Holy Spirit simply did not exist before the glorification of Jesus, not merely that it had not been bestowed on the church prior to that time. The questions which must have bewildered readers of his book with even a modicum of theological sophistication are legion. The conception of Jesus in Matthew 1:18, for example, countered Witt's denial of the existence of the Holy Spirit at that time. Moreover, the role of the Holy Spirit in the baptism of Jesus gainsays Witt's assertion, as did Jesus' own frequent references to the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit, or "Spirit of God", is present in the Old Testament, and Jesus referred to it in Mark 12:36 as having inspired David. Critics could have also mentioned that the eternity of the Holy Spirit, having always existed, had been a creedal attribute since the early history of Christianity (though this is not explicit in the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed), and that this was also the case in Lutheran and various other Protestant confessional writings. In fairness to Witt, it should be stated that he no longer regarded himself as responsible to theological formulations apart from those which he found in the Bible.

Instead of dealing with these arguably crucial issues, which he may not have foreseen as Achilles' heels in his argument, Witt stressed the determining centrality of Pentecost in empowering both individual Christians and the churches to which they belonged. Probably thinking primarily of the Scandinavian Lutheran establishments, he asserted that "in our time the churches are generally much weaker than the first Christian church was". In contrast to their modern counterparts, apostolic believers gained their strength through a sorely needed infusion of the Holy Spirit. Witt cited Peter as the archetypical example of this, as many other Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal preachers had done. To this Swede, the lesson was clear: the same Spirit which had invigorated and emboldened Christians in Jerusalem nearly 1900

years earlier could give new life and strength to Scandinavian believers in the twentieth century.[48]

Many Christians whose theological views differed radically from those which Witt held could have agreed with part of what he wrote about the significance of Pentecost to the vigour and indeed the survival of the apostolic church. The common ground diminished, however, when Witt began to comment on specific charismata. Without explaining his selection, he focused on healing, prophecy, and glossolalia. Regarding the first of these gifts, Witt declared that the church has always possessed it and referred his readers to James 5:14-15 concerning the anointing of the sick in the name of Jesus. His own part in healing, he confided, had lately increased. Until recently he had not realised that he personally possessed this gift and had therefore refrained from anointing anyone. Since the coming of Pentecostalism to Sweden, however, Witt had begun to do so, though only when at least one other Christian was present to participate in the healing. The results were apparent, at least to Witt: "I who write this have in countless cases personally seen how the Lord has restored the health of anointed persons. . . . and in many cases we have been able to praise God for immediately intervening in the body of the sick person in some incomprehensible way and thereby demonstrating his presence".[49]

Witt acknowledged that in I Corinthians 14 Paul had explicitly placed prophecy higher than glossolalia, but he nevertheless devoted only slightly more than one paragraph to the former charism. Witt pointedly denied that prophecy necessarily meant predicting future events. Rather, "to prophesy is to speak to people for their edification, admonition, and consolation". It was, moreover, "the ability to present the truth so that it comes alive in the souls of those who listen. . .". With this inclusive definition, it was hardly surprising that Witt regarded the gift of prophecy as "always being beneficial".[50]

Witt admitted that glossolalia, by contrast, was "a gift of lesser value". Probably owing to the controversy surrounding it in 1907, however, he gave it much more attention in his book than any of the other charismata. Much of his discussion of glossolalia was devoted to delineating its purpose, which was probably unclear to many Christians and most non-Christians in Sweden at that time. After stating that the phenomenon had two purposes, Witt proceeded to name three. First, he declared

that it contributed to the faith of the individual who had this gift, although how it did so he did not explain. Secondly, Witt stated that glossolalia served as "a sign for those who, not without apparent effort on God's part, wish to receive his Word". Thirdly, he was convinced that especially in the theologically turbulent waters of Swedish religious life glossolalia could be a sign which aids the church in its struggle against infidelity. The masses of nonbelievers could not see the Holy Spirit, Witt reasoned, but such physical manifestations of it as speaking in tongues were difficult for even despisers of Christ to overlook. Glossolalia was "a warning to those nonbelievers who have previously been indifferent to the name of Jesus, but who now at his personal appearance through his instruments are called either to yield to the truth or to resist it".[51]

Keenly aware of the fact that many of his fellow Swedes had taken the latter course and that several Christians and non-Christians alike in Sweden had written articles questioning the sanity of people who used glossolalia, Witt devoted part of his book to defending them from such indictments. He quoted Swedish medical authorities and others who had described the "possession" of those who spoke in tongues as an aspect of "religious insanity" and "hysterical dual personalities". Yet Witt offered no evidence to counter these charges, and he made little reasoned effort to refute them. Instead, he merely asserted that science had grown weak long ago and that human thoughts had to be subordinate to the eternal realties which the despised Bible revealed. Witt also suggested that practitioners of medicine restrict their professional activities to caring for the genuinely ill and not spend their time writing about Pentecostalism.[52]

Witt seemed nearly as exasperated that some Christians had criticised the Pentecostal movement and ridiculed the charismata which it was emphasising. It was particularly disappointing to him that even in Swedish free church circles Pentecostal worship came under fire. Witt quoted one ostensibly representative nonconformist pastor who had described the movement as a "spiritual plague" and doubted that God took pleasure in services "where many people simultaneously speak in tongues, perhaps during unfortunate epileptic seizures". To Witt critiques of this sort were not only uninformed but also misdirected. They confirmed his belief that even Christians tended to have faith in external forms rather than in God's

revelation. He admitted that not everything that transpired at Pentecostal services was led by the Holy Spirit and that occasionally apparent non-Christians also used glossolalia. Witt counselled readers to follow the Johannine advice of testing the spirits to determine whether they were of God. Linking two of his keen interests, he concluded his treatise on an optimistic note by declaring that such new developments as Pentecostalism were signs that the Parousia was at hand.[53]

Having made these detailed if unsystematic written commitments to Pentecostalism in 1907 and 1908, Witt continued his independent ministry along lines which to some degree parallelled those which more denominationally-minded Scandinavian advocates of the movement were simultaneously following. At the same time, however, he was sharply critical of certain trends which he perceived in Swedish Pentecostalism, especially after his initial burst of enthusiasm had waned. For sixteen years Witt was thus a *de facto* Pentecostal with one foot in the movement and the other outside practically all formal religious organisations, itinerating in the often nebulous world of independent evangelism.

By his own account, Witt began to use glossolalia by 1908 and also engaged in exorcism and faith healing at that time. Early that year he related how he had preached in rural areas of the province of Uppland immediately north of Stockholm. On an island in its archipelago Witt met a bed-ridden man who had been sick for at least six weeks and appeared entirely emaciated but who nevertheless refused medication. Witt anointed him in the name of Jesus, whereupon - in Witt's words - "he immediately became well and stood up". This healing aroused local attention, and at a meeting which Witt led that evening "approximately ten people surrendered themselves to God". The following evening he anointed and laid hands on a sick former railway construction worker in the presence of about twenty other people. "He opened his mouth, and an evil spirit came out of him like a raging bull", Witt wrote a few days later. "This bellowing continued for two minutes without him having to draw a breath. During that time his body shook mightily, and his face became alternately blue and red. Large beads of sweat ran down his face, but finally he recovered, and as though he had awakened from a nightmare he cried 'Thank you, Jesus!'" The subsequent change of the man's character confirmed Witt's belief that his healing ministry was in harmony with God's will, as did the willingness of other

people in the vicinity to testify to conversion experiences in the wake of this healing.[54] Witt also regarded Boltzius as an impressive vehicle of God's healing power and related at length to readers of *Det gode Budskab* how that relatively well-known Swede had recently anointed a Norwegian woman who had subsequently experienced healing within a matter of minutes.[55]

Later in 1908 Witt conducted meetings in a tent pitched on the outskirts of Visby, the well-preserved medieval town on the Swedish island of Gotland in the Baltic. A large number of people attended, he reported, partly out of curiosity about glossolalia, so roughly one-half of the audience had to sit or stand outside the tent. The phenomenon of speaking in tongues, however, prompted sharp responses from the pastors of the nonconformist churches in Visby, who began to hold counter-meetings at which they verbally attacked Witt. His infelicitous choice of metaphor in describing those denominations as "nothing but religious trade unions" deepened the rift. Witt acknowledged that he had spoken tactlessly but fired another rhetorical shot at what he regarded as unbiblical sarcasm by remarking that in Sweden "each denomination regards itself as absolutely infallible and as the only correct one, and thus believes that all the others are wrong".[56]

Witt not only stated his case for defending glossolalia and other charismata but became directly involved in public duels over the integrity of the Pentecostal movement. In one such acrimonious incident he crossed swords with C.G. Lundin in 1908. Early that year this fairly prominent Swedish Baptist pastor had published a severe attack on Pentecostalism in his denomination's newspaper, *Wecko-Posten* (i.e. The Weekly Mail). After witnessing the results of the movement in Sweden and especially amongst his fellow Baptists there, Lundin concluded that in many instances it had given Christians "stones instead of bread". The phenomena which had accompanied the movement, he generalised, had been loud shouting, various physical gyrations, "a certain kind of unconsciousness together with the expression of incomprehensible sounds", and the like. What Lundin missed at the Pentecostal services was serious study of the Bible and efforts to effect conversions. In setting up his assault on the new movement, this Baptist clergyman reminded readers that such developments should be tested by their fruits. Those which Pentecostalism had borne in Sweden seemed either rotten or mutant. Whereas Jesus had prayed

for the unity of the church in John 17, Lundin asserted that "in every country which it has reached, the movement from Los Angeles has caused schisms amongst the people of God". No less seriously, he accused Pentecostals of being "unreliable in their words and behaviour". Lundin made this contention because "prophecies and glossolalia, expressed as God's direct and inalienable Word, have again and again proven to be entirely incorrect; they are thus false prophecies and false glossolalia". This confirmed his perception that "human feelings have come to be regarded as the work of the Holy Spirit". Thirdly, Lundin found stifling intolerance in Pentecostalism, notwithstanding its leaders oft-repeated assurances that it was a free movement. He referred to instances in which people had been labelled "opponents of God and his Spirit" because they had appealed to Biblical texts when questioning the validity of Pentecostal phenomena".[57]

Clearly irritated by Lundin's critique, which did not mention him or anyone else by name, Witt responded with an open letter published in *Svenska Tribunen* (i.e. The Swedish Tribune), a weekly newspaper which served as an unofficial free church and especially Baptist organ. He chose that outlet after the editor of *Wecko-Posten* refused to grant him space. Matching the acerbity of Lundin's rhetoric, Witt declared that "your presentation gives the impression that you lack an understanding of spiritual matters". Curiously enough, he gave most of the issues Lundin had raised a wide berth, focusing instead primarily on the question of glossolalia. Witt resorted to what was rapidly becoming a conventional defence of the phenomenon by appealing to I Corinthians 14, in which Paul lent his qualified support to it. He also sought to refute Lundin's caricature of the genesis of glossolalia in Los Angeles. To Witt, the New Testament made it abundantly clear that it began in Jerusalem during the apostolic infancy of the church. Related to this, he sought to deflate Lundin's deprecatory portrayal of Pentecostalism as "the movement from Los Angeles". Such a phrase, Witt stated, had no place in a nonpartisan essay. He concluded his open letter by hurling back at Lundin the latter's call for a sober assaying of Pentecostalism with the touchstone of the Scriptures. In this vein Witt challenged the Baptist pastor to reconsider whether his article in *Wecko-Posten* was defensible.[58]

The Ecclesiological Meridian

A year after Witt published his book about glossolalia and other charismata, he completed his next study, *Hemligheten af Kristi kropp, som är församlingen* (i.e. The Secret of the Body of Christ, Which Is the Church). This treatise, which was arguably one of the best in Witt's corpus, was essentially a presentation of his mature ecclesiology, in which he placed the church into the context of Judaeo-Christian *Heilsgeschichte*, and a brief discussion of problems arising from varying understandings of what the church was and how it should be administered. Precisely why Witt found it necessary to expound his ecclesiological views at that time is difficult to ascertain. He may have been responding to years of verbal attacks on his occasionally acidic comments about ecclesiastical bureaucracies and related matters. It seems quite plausible that after nearly two decades of weak thrusts and parries Witt felt an emotional need to state his case conclusively and in detail and then be free to focus his attention more fully on his evangelism. On the other hand, the coming of Pentecostalism to Sweden may have helped to bring his ecclesiology to its fullest development, because that movement tended to cut across conventional denominational lines and redefine the faith and spirituality of both individual Christians and the local units in which they were gathered.

Before considering the most salient pillars of Witt's ecclesiology, one should be aware of one maxim and two historical developments which made deep imprints on it. First, to Witt the church was essentially an invisible, comprehensive fellowship of all Christians. The visible church meant little to him. He recognised a weak need for believers to be affiliated with each other in local congregations, but these were at most of secondary importance. Witt emphasised repeatedly that the church universal was the body of Christ and individual Christians were its limbs. This scheme left little room for denominations or other intermediate organisations. To the extent that they were valid, they could be justified only on practical and not on theological grounds. As a corollary to this, Witt was thoroughly disgusted with the partisan spirit he perceived in many communions.

Turning to the historical context, Witt's ecclesiology was that of a millenarian. Awaiting the imminent end of history, he thought in terms of a temporary church,

one sandwiched between eschatological dispensations without need of enduring structures to continue its work in this world. Secondly, by 1908 Witt was committed to the Pentecostal movement, and the marks of the church in his view were those associated with that recent phenomenon.

The first two chapters of *Hemligheten* are devoted to the fall of mankind and the role of Israel in God's plan of salvation. Writing in a distinctively dispensationalist mode, Witt divided what he regarded as the ca 6 000 years of world history into millennial "days", each of which corresponded to roughly 1 000 years. He then invoked the "year-day" theory derived from II Peter 3:8 and declared that Sunday and Monday of his eschatological week were the period when the human race in general reigned. Tuesday and Wednesday were the dispensation of Israel, while Thursday and Friday (the latter of which Witt believed was drawing to a close) were that of the gentiles. Saturday, the imminent period of 1 000 years, would be an era of bliss and rest.[59] In this scheme, the history of the church corresponded to the gentile age. Witt defined its eschatological role as serving as God's people during the period bracketed by the fall of the house of David (which he did not designate in a strictly chronological sense) and the symbolic restoration of Israel.[60]

Witt turned to the New Testament for his general definition of the church, which he identified with the mystical body of Christ. Relying heavily on Pauline Christology and ecclesiology, as have many other theologians with ideas similar to those which dominate *Hemligheten*, Witt found this identity to be a central and recurrent theme of New Testament theology. To Witt, it seemed virtually self-evident that Paul had received special revelation to arrive at this concept. His Pauline references in this regard (e.g. Romans 12:5, I Corinthians 10:17, I Corinthians 12:27) are not unusual.[61] One of the few surprising elements in his use of Pauline theology in his argument is his neglect of such *loci classici* as Ephesians 4:4 and 5:23.

Having identified the church as the unified body of Christ, Witt proceeded to delineate its tasks in the world. The overarching one, he believed, was "through the ages to be the fulfilment in his [i.e. God's] presence which he, the Blessed One, needs in order to be eternally pleased and to carry out his plans for his endless creation". Within this general purpose, Witt specified that the church should serve to reveal the thoughts, intentions, will, and mind of God in ways analogous to how

a human body can perform similar functions which emanate from the head atop it. Again, few other Scandinavian theologians would have disagreed entirely with Witt on this, although his erstwhile Lutheran colleagues would have emphasised that the principal tasks of the church are to administer the sacraments as means of God's grace and ensure the ongoing proclamation of the Gospel.[62]

Where Witt departed from Protestant consensus, however, was primarily in his relating the body of Christ as the invisible church to Christian perfection. Members of the church, he believed, could be a revelation of God's perfection, especially the perfect love of Christ: "His selfless life appears through them - his love, his humility, his kindness and patience, his sacrificing of his own interests for the glory of God and the well-being of others". Witt envisaged the incorporation of the Christian in the divine as the true means of self-realisation: "Only when the individual disappears in God does he find himself, the eternal 'I'". He did not develop this thought in the direction of full-fledged mysticism, and in *Hemligheten* it appears as a cryptic loose end. Whether and how Witt truly believed that people in this world could be so enveloped in the divine that they could be genuine manifestations of God's perfection is perhaps arguable. In any case, his Christian anthropology had obviously drifted far from the *simul justus et peccator* tenet of orthodox Lutheranism.[63]

Witt then sought to deal briefly with the difficult question of why the church, especially its clergy, generally fell so far short of the lofty purposes which he believed it was supposed to fulfil. He attributed this general failure to the tendency of the clergy to be bound to tradition, especially fixed confessional formulations. Singling out the national religious heritage of Sweden for special treatment, Witt castigated the stereotyped Lutheran pastor as an antiquarian orthodoxist; "everything apart from what he regards as 'pure' doctrine is heresy which necessarily brings death and damnation". To live, on the other hand, is to change and adapt. To his regret, Witt perceived "a shortage of original personalities in our time"; despite recent new currents in Scandinavian Christian waters, tradition still seemed to reign supreme.[64]

After delineating these and other underlying tenets of his ecclesiology, Witt turned to several problems which he believed were hampering the church, especially in Sweden, early in the twentieth century. He prefaced his remarks by reiterating a

principle which he had expounded in earlier writings, namely that in its conduct the church should adhere to what is prescribed in the Bible and not be content with not doing what is therein explicitly forbidden. Three of the deviations from this norm which Witt broached were "papal power and all its abominations" (though episcopal polity in general was not mentioned); the insistence on a formally educated clergy, which Witt believed was foreign to the New Testament in general and particularly the Acts of the Apostles; and doctrinal requirements for the admission to the church, such as the traditional Scandinavian practice of testing confirmands on their knowledge of Luther's *Small Catechism.*[65]

Witt devoted two chapters of *Hemligheten* to the sacraments. In accordance with his understanding of the sanctification of the believer, he emphasised that those who accepted Jesus Christ participated in the same death and resurrection which the Lord had experienced. Furthermore, baptism was an act of obedience and surrender to Christ. As such it was necessarily voluntary, a position which confirmed Witt's belief that infant baptism was unbiblical. In harmony with this, he also rejected the notion of *folkdop*, or the baptism of entire ethnic groups, in favour of that of individual converts. Finally, in contrast to most other theologians, Witt denied that a Trinitarian formula should be used in baptism, ostensibly because the apostles had immersed converts only in the name of the Lord (e.g. Acts 22:16). How this could be squared with the avowedly Trinitarian language of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 Witt did not seek to explain. Instead, he merely asserted that the Trinitarian formula should be reserved for the millennium, when masses of gentiles would be baptised into the Kingdom of God.[66]

Witt's treatment of the Lord's Supper was linked to his plea for Christian unity. He lamented that the harmony which he believed had prevailed in the primitive church had not survived the first century and appealed to Pauline texts in his plea for its restoration. One step towards that goal, Witt asserted without explanation, would be a reimplementation of communion on what he regarded as correct Biblical principles. This meant *inter alia* adhering strictly to the words of institution recorded in the Synoptic gospels and in I Corinthians 11. How one would deal with variations in these texts Witt did not explain. He did, however, broach his displeasure with certain eucharistic practices in Sweden and Christendom generally. The symbolic

significance of the loaf was critical to Witt. He emphasised that if it is the body of Christ, then there should be only one loaf, not several and certainly not the wafer-like hosts which Lutheranism had inherited from Roman Catholicism. Similarly, there should be only one chalice. Moreover, unlike many other religious nonconformists in Scandinavia at that time, Witt adamantly opposed the practice of "closed communion" as an inherent rending of the body of Christ. Beyond these grievances, his handling of eucharistic theology is economical, and he did not seek to explain how he perceived the relationship of the sacrament to God's grace, as Lutheran theologians might have been expected to do. Witt had clearly departed from the Lutheran understanding of the "real presence" of Christ in the sacrament, however, and he described the loaf as a "symbol" (*sinnebild*) of both the physical body of Christ and of the church. His eucharistic theology, in short, was closer to that of Zwingli than that of Luther.[67]

Other Controversies

Witt's hostility to denominations appears to have increased for several years as it became increasingly difficult to find congregations of any communion that would allow him to preach in their chapels. "One must conquer one's own inhibitions if one is to go 'outside the camp'", he confessed in 1911, "especially if one was spiritually born within it and consequently sees through the eyes of one's teachers, to which liberation and independence have not come". Witt found it particularly disillusioning that the Pentecostal movement had caused dissonance in some of the nonconformist congregations in Stockholm, and that this had prompted the city's police department to dispatch detectives to attend services at the affected churches. He also found it lamentable that some such bodies had responded to internal strife by arguing their cases in the daily press and closing their services to non-members.[68]

By 1913 Witt had virtually abandoned all hope of co-operating with the existing churches in Stockholm or elsewhere in Sweden. "There is no freedom here, for everything is locked in behind the borders of [religious] factions, and a free Gospel is unknown in this country", he lamented to Andersen's followers in Norway. "Here

all the buildings are closed to anyone who is not affiliated with a denomination which has a specific confession of faith. The free word supposedly 'divides the congregations'. . .".[69] Witt found slight consolation in the fact that one state church parish in Stockholm had begun to hold what he termed "free meetings" at which anyone could speak. He feared, however, that if those services became "too free", the episcopal hierarchy of the Church of Sweden would intervene and terminate them.[70] In any case, Witt does not appear to have shown any interest in co-operating with his erstwhile denomination, and the Lutheran establishment in Stockholm is not known to have invited him to do so.

Again and again Witt singled out Swedish Baptists for particularly acerbic treatment when he bemoaned the denominational captivity of Pentecostalism in Sweden. This was only slightly ironic, for he had little in common with that denomination - in contradistinction to the other churches in Sweden -apart from his commitment to believers' baptism. At least as early as 1908 Witt expressed publicly his dismay that "when the revival from Los Angeles came here it was first planted in the Baptists' field". He blamed what he perceived as a loss of vitality in the movement on the fact that members of that denomination had "appropriated" it. Witt also lamented that *Svenska Tribunen*, the unofficial organ of both the Baptist church and Pentecostalism in Sweden at that time, was no longer a nonsectarian newspaper but one which "bears an absolutely baptistic stamp and suppresses whatever does not fall within its narrow point of view". He was especially miffed because the editor of that newspaper had abridged a piece which he had recently contributed to it. Witt tempered his criticism of Swedish Baptists slightly by declaring that Carl Hedeen was a very gifted pastor whose prayers had contributed to many healings but qualified even this with a remark that he was also "one of the strictest Baptists we have, and his adherence to party lines hinders the freedom of the spirit".[71]

Witt acknowledged that Hedeen's Elim Chapel in Stockholm was an exception to what he described as a general state of spiritual deadness in that city.[72] With obvious glee, however, he reported early in 1909 that some of the people who frequently worshipped with his own small flock were officially members of Elim "but "found the Baptist limits to be too narrow and unbearable". Probably referring to restrictions placed on prophecy and glossolalia there, Witt asserted that those

who had grown dissatisfied with Elim "find no room for their spirit there, and it even happens that other people sing them down when the Lord wants to use them". He was therefore not surprised that the awakening at Elim had allegedly died out.[73]

Witt's negative attitude towards Swedish Baptists also coloured his perception of Barratt's baptism. The Norwegian Pentecostal leader had requested John Ongman (1845-1931) of the Örebro wing of the Swedish denomination to immerse him and his wife but was refused because he declared his unwillingness to become a Baptist. Barratt had then turned to Lewi Pethrus (1884-1974), who was about to leave the denomination over his opening of communion to non-Baptists at his church in Stockholm. Pethrus baptised the Barratts in September 1913.[74] Witt found this slightly more acceptable but nevertheless wished that Barratt had been baptised by "a free brother", such as himself, "who stood outside all parties and man-made churches".[75]

Witt's anti-Baptist comments continued year after year, generally rising in a crescendo of severity. By 1914 he could write with obvious reference to Swedish Baptists that "the religious parties in our country, especially the one which has baptism by immersion as its hallmark, work for their own selfish interests". Witt expressed bluntly what he believed was the prevailing Baptist attitude towards his own ministry: "They would exterminate us if they could". One positive result of this supposed persecution which his followers experienced was a deeper unifying love amongst them.[76]

In a relatively long essay published shortly before his death, Witt discussed certain aspects of Pentecostalism from a mildly critical but distinctly sympathetic viewpoint. This piece, titled "Det s.k. 'pingstväckelsen' og bibelordet" (i.e. The So-called 'Pentecostal Revival' and the Word of the Bible), represents some of his most mature thoughts on the movement and thus serves admirably as a conclusion to the present section of this study. It was not intended as a systematic treatment, but primarily as an attempt to clear up certain popular misunderstandings.

Pentecost apparently had become the pivotal event in determining what in Witt's mind was valid ecclesiology, sanctification, and ecclesiastical practice in general, including the presence and use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, so normative was it that Witt regarded the adjective in the term "Pentecostal revival" as superfluous

and sectarian. "No real revival can arise without being influenced by the seed of Pentecost, and therefore this name is a partisan label", he reasoned.

Witt's doctrine of the church was thoroughly Pentecostal and had very little in common with that of Lutheran confessional theology. In Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession*, the church is defined as "the assembly of the faithful amongst whom the Gospel is preached purely and the holy sacraments are administered in accordance with the Gospel". Witt, however, sought to answer "the frequently debated question 'Who are the people of God?'" by turning to the Bible, where, he insisted, it was "clearly answered". His "church", predictably, was the one established in Acts 2: "This was the fulfilment of the promise of the gift of the Spirit, in which God baptised some in the Holy Spirit and thus made them his people." Witt did not declare it explicitly, but one must conclude from his line of argumentation that he regarded those people who had not experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit as being *extra ecclesiam*. There is nothing in his ecclesiological paragraphs about either faith or the sacraments being signs of the church.

Witt's concept of salvation also bore a Pentecostal stamp. Whereas classical Lutheranism emphasised justification through faith made possible by the atoning death of Christ and God's unmerited grace, Witt dismissed this as merely "the negative side, and we cannot be satisfied with having it alone". Instead, he continued to stress the centrality of sanctification as the way to "a new existence" which the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit makes possible.

Witt devoted much of his essay to what he perceived as a widespread misunderstanding of the role of glossolalia. He declared "unbiblical" the common belief that "glossolalia must be present as an indispensable sign that baptism in the Spirit has occurred, and that therefore no-one has been baptised in the Holy Spirit if he cannot or has not spoken in tongues". Adducing I Corinthians 12:30, Witt found Paul's rhetorical question ("Do all speak in tongues?") more cogent than the assertions of some twentieth-century charismatics who answered it affirmatively. Adopting a more pastoral line, he also pointed out that generalisations about the gift of glossolalia being present in all Christians were harmful to those who were sincere but spiritually immature because it could eradicate their hope of becoming mature in their faith. On the other hand, exaggerated emphasis on glossolalia, Witt believed,

was giving "countless souls throughout the country" the false impression that their goal should be the acquisition of this charism, and those who received it allegedly "found peace and satisfaction not in Jesus, but in glossolalia".

Witt concluded his essay with an admonition to return to the simplicity and "child-like" views of the apostolic church. By doing so, Christians could facilitate God's blessing of them and promote revivals both within organised congregations and amongst Christians who stood apart from them. "Time is short, and Jesus is coming soon", he proclaimed.[77]

Witt's essay, which was a qualified defence of Pentecostalism and was not explicitly directed at any individual or group within the general movement, gained wider attention when Barratt responded to it in his Korsets Seir@. The Norwegian Pentecostal took umbrage at several of Witt's statements, some of which he does not appear to have understood. Underlying some of his specific reactions to Witt's categorical statements was an apparent perception of theological arrogance. Barratt pointed out that Witt, after asserting that the Bible provided unambiguous answers to questions concerning Pentecostalism, had proceeded to contradict his oft-proclaimed principle of literal hermeneutics by offering his own interpretations of Scriptural texts, some of which deviated markedly from those at which other Christians had arrived. The Swede's comments about glossolalia illustrated the point. Barratt emphasised that many Pentecostals believed that the gift of tongues was a legitimate sign of the bestowing of the Holy Spirit, although he also stressed that he himself did not preach that all true Christians possessed it. Clearly Barratt believed that Witt was guilty of simplistic thinking in suggesting that full unity of doctrine could be attained amongst Christians. Barratt, who by then had helped to establish a distinctive Pentecostal denomination in Norway (a development which the independent-minded Witt and Andersen had opposed), defended this by arguing that "there is every reason to believe that various churches, or 'parties', will arise, reflecting varying views of and perceptions of many questions".[78] The cleft separating Witt from mainline, rapidly institutionalising Pentecostalism was thus clear, and he subsequently disappeared from the pages of *Korsets Seir*.

David Petander

Heroes tend to reflect the values of the people who esteem them. If Witt admired without qualification any contemporary Swedish religious figure, it was David Petander (1875-1914), probably because he saw in this unique pastor an idealised image of himself. A generation younger than Witt, he was born and raised in Göteborg. Petander's immediate family were a pious lot whose friends included such prominent Swedish Lutheran men of the cloth as Peter Wieselgren (1800-1877) and Peter Fjellstedt. After receiving a degree in theology at the University of Uppsala in 1903, he served several pastorates in the Church of Sweden for a total of seven years. In 1910, however, Petander refused to accept further appointments in the Lutheran establishment, claiming at that theologically turbulent time that the preaching then ostensibly normative in the state church had little in common with the Word of God. He thereupon became an independent evangelist, though without formally leaving the Church of Sweden or affiliating with a nonconformist denomination. Petander's independence quickly earned him the sobriquet *vandrarprästen* (i.e. the wandering pastor), as he sojourned from one town to another. Like Witt, he found it increasingly difficult to gain access to the chapels of dissenting communions. Petander was thus compelled to preach in a variety of other settings, such as Good Templar halls, schoolhouses, and outdoors. This did not prevent him from attracting relatively large audiences, though, especially in Stockholm, Gävle, and Uppsala in 1913. His message included a general condemnation of worldliness and a call to holy living in imitation of the life of Christ. When the First World War, in which Sweden maintained its neutrality, broke out in August 1914, Petander, than thirty-nine years old and an avowed pacifist, refused to register for possible military service. He was arrested though not prosecuted in an unfortunate and entirely unnecessary episode which his biographers maintain probably hastened his death later that year.[79]

Witt did not write a great deal about Petander, but the little he did commit to paper concerning the man bordered on adoration and probably confirmed in the minds of Witt's own admirers what they knew to be his central religious values: "We have amongst us here in Stockholm a man who seems to have drowned in the sea of love, for he lives love and gives love to his fellow human beings in literally

the same way that Jesus did", Witt announced without reserve in mid-1913. To Witt, Petander seemed to have taken upon himself the form of a servant; he had left behind a relatively privileged position in the ranks of the established clergy in order to "live amongst the poor, visit the sick whom others refuse to call on because they are afraid of being infected themselves, wash their clothing, scrub their floors, and in other ways seek to assuage their suffering". Witt praised Petander for preaching an ethic of self-denial and redemptive suffering. He expressed sympathy for his willingness to itinerate and to be turned away from many sanctuaries because, in words which he had previously used to describe his own plight, "he divided congregations". Witt used Petander's case to assure readers of Andersen's periodical in Norway that standing entirely outside the denominational kaleidoscope could be a blessing, as "outside the camp is the real place for the faithful, for only there do they find the Master himself".[80]

Witt's Pacifism

The guns of August 1914 cataclysmically ended an era of relative tranquillity in European international relations. They also shattered the illusion of many Christians that peace had become normative in the continent's modern history and that Christian ideals were guiding the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. All the Scandinavian countries succeeded in maintaining neutrality during the conflagration, and in the main they did not suffer greatly from interruptions in shipping and trade embargoes. Most of the political parties in the Nordic countries advocated continued neutrality, and large sectors of the public viewed the Central and Entente powers with a "plague on both your houses" attitude. In Sweden a small number of interventionists urged active support of the German-Austrian-Turkish cause and began in 1916 to publish a weekly magazine titled *Svenska Lösen* (i.e. Swedish Ransom) to advance their campaign. Its editor was the prominent author Sven Lidman (1882-1960), who subsequently became a well-known Pentecostal lay preacher. This movement was an exception, however, which contrasts conspicuously with a broad multi-party front which successfully kept Sweden out of the First World War. The

country's neutrality was of the armed sort, and a law enacted in 1914 reconfirmed Sweden's long-standing policy of making most men subject to military service. Witt hurled himself into the debate with characteristic aplomb. In 1915 he published a short book titled *Kan en troende bära vapen?* (i.e. Can A Believer Bear Arms?) in which he answered that question with a categorical No. Witt's line of reasoning combined an ethic of the imitation of Christ, prescriptive ethics from the Sermon on the Mount and other New Testament texts, and his own perfectionist understanding of sanctification.

Witt began by asserting that the faith revealed in apostolic times is immutable and that consequently the "life of faith" (*troslif*) of twentieth-century Christians should be essentially the same as that of believers nearly two millennia ago. He then linked this to an argument for ethics based in large measure on the imitation of Christ. Moreover, not only should Christians model their behaviour on that of Christ, but his being made it possible for them to do so. Twisting Pauline logic, Witt reasoned that as Adam had brought sin to all his descendants, Jesus bestowed a condition of *posse non peccare* on those who believe in him. This typically perfectionist line of thought, then reflective of Witt's post-Lutheran anthropology, allowed him to declare that "just as the life of faith comes forth in the initiator and perfecter of faith (i.e. Jesus), so it is naturally necessary that it will also come to the fore amongst his disciples, because the same spirit of faith influences all of them". As two examples of this, he simplistically adduced Peter and John, who supposedly had become mild individuals after Pentecost. Arguing from absence, Witt further declared that in neither the Acts of the Apostles nor in the New Testament epistles is there evidence that early Christians advocated the bearing of weapons or that they ever did so themselves. The implication is that modern-day Christians, like their forebears in the first century, are not only commanded but spiritually empowered to be pacifists, as Christ ostensibly had been. Witt's Christology was extreme in this regard and reflected a certitude arising from his literalist hermeneutics and assumption that the gospels provide a comprehensive portrait of Jesus. This Swedish pacifist could thus believe it was self-evident that Jesus "could not under any circumstances bear a weapon" and that "politics was entirely foreign to him". For Witt's Paul, in imitation of Christ, "it

would have been impossible to serve as a member of parliament or even cast a vote in a parliamentary election".[81]

Witt then shifted to prescriptive ethics, building his case for Christian pacifism primarily on the Sermon on the Mount. Obviously aware that the ideals expressed in Matthew 5-7 had little in common with the realities of general human behaviour, he explained that "all of the so-called 'Sermon on the Mount' is a discourse on his words to Pilate: 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36)". To Witt, in contrast to conventional Lutheran interpretations, the statements there compiled were laws to be strictly followed, not ideals whose impossibility of fulfilment underscore the sinful nature of humanity. They flowed forth inevitably from Christ's being and nothing else: "Here the nature of the lamb becomes clear, and these laws for his kingdom are powers taken from his own being, and not in any way the conclusions reached in philosophical reasoning. . . . He was his own words. There was no distinction between what he was and what he said . . .".[82] This is deontological ethics of the most rudimentary kind.

Witt's brief treatise on Christian pacifism was a tendentious piece clearly intended to sway opinion. He did not attempt to deal with the topic comprehensively. Almost entirely absent are discussions of matters which, had he broached them, may have compelled Witt to present a more nuanced case. He did not, for example, try to deal with issues arising from the consequences of pacifism for other people or society in general. Instead, Witt was content to refer to Acts 5:40-41 and remind readers that the apostles had been happy to suffer for their allegiance to the name of Jesus.[83] This harmonised not only with his concept of perfection but also with his individualistic understanding of Christian ethics. Not even in a matter such as resistance to military service did Witt reveal any awareness of the social implications of questions of behaviour which confronted Christians. After nearly a quarter-century as an independent evangelist in Sweden and Norway, he apparently had little concern for ethical dimensions of human relations. His comments on Christian pacifism, in short, are limited almost exclusively to the vertical relationship between God and the individual believer.

Nor did Witt deal with New Testament texts which have been used in arguments against Christian pacifism. The closest he came to doing so was a brief consideration

of Romans 13, the *locus classicus* of defences of civil imperative. Witt declared that the first seven verses of that chapter pertaining to the prerogative of the state and the subjection of people to it, may have been a spurious interpolation. The only one of the "quite good reasons" he adduced for believing this, however, is that Romans 13:8-10 can be a smooth and reasonable continuation of Romans 12:17-21.[84] Nowhere in Witt's book about pacifism did he seek to analyse the contemporary European political situation. The war had obviously prompted him to write it, but his pacifism was apparently absolute and thus not qualified by the conditions which obtained at any given time. It is therefore not surprising that Witt did not devote even a paragraph to advising young Swedes who were either already performing military service or facing conscription; he did not seek to offer alternatives or describe what the consequences of refusing to comply might be. It is impossible to gauge the extent of the impact of this book on the minor movement in Sweden to resist conscription, if indeed it made one. That is in itself questionable. *Kan en troende bära vapen?* received scant attention in the Swedish religious press, and the secular press appears to have ignored it entirely. The value of the book, in retrospect, may lie largely in the light it sheds on Witt's poorly developed notions of biblical interpretation and Christian ethics as he entered the last decade of his life.

Witt As a Pentecostal

Late in life Witt changed his fervently antidenominational position and joined Lewi Pethrus' Filadelfia Church in Stockholm, the flagship of Swedish Pentecostalism. Precisely when that occurred is unknown and probably insignificant, partly because Witt's affiliation with that congregation does not appear to have been particularly close. He continued to travel a good deal in both Sweden and Norway as an itinerant evangelist, often preaching in young Pentecostal churches which were rapidly multiplying as the movement gained more institutional structure.

Comments which Witt made about his ministry and the Swedish Pentecostal movement during and shortly after the First World War cast light on his thinking in this regard. In 1917 he praised an informal congregation of fishermen and their

families on the island of Gräsö off the Swedish coast in the Gulf of Bothnia. By his own testimony, Witt had then ministered to them for approximately a decade. Though their worldly poverty prevented them from constructing a chapel, Witt found them rich in the Holy Spirit as they met in private homes to study the Bible, give testimonies, and pray. He reported with unveiled delight that the gifts of prophecy and glossolalia often found expression amongst them. Witt interpreted these phenomena on Gräsö as further signs that the Second Advent was at hand.[85] Two and a half years later he praised the spirit of repentance and humility which he believed had recently begun to prevail among Pentecostal leaders in Germany. "If only that could take place in Scandinavia!" Witt declared in a published letter to Nordquelle. "But here we are not mature enough for that. The spirit of egoism and self-righteousness which now prevails is not easy to exorcise".[86]

Though often away from Stockholm, Witt appears to have been close to Pethrus, and he contributed to the periodical which Pethrus and other Swedish Pentecostals launched in the Swedish capital during the First World War, *Evangelii Härold* (i.e. Herald of the Gospel). A letter which Witt sent to Pethrus from Norway in the summer of 1916 reveals how committed the former was to both the sensational and the more subtle phenomena associated with Pentecostalism at that early stage. Referring to the congregation in Drammen, an unappealing port south-west of Kristiania not generally known for its religious fervour, he found it heart-warming how faithfully many of its members were studying the Bible and reassuring that because of this dedication to the Scriptures "they are not easily whisked away by the many winds which are blowing in our restless times". Witt also related uncritically a memorable incident involving that congregation in 1907 and which in typical Pentecostal form he declared was an "outpouring of the Spirit". "At several services the hall was filled with small glass beads", he wrote. "When they fell down on the people, most of them broke, filling the atmosphere with the most beautiful aroma". Witt thought that had been one of the "most miraculous" things which had occurred in the Pentecostal movement in Scandinavia in recent years. He also remained committed to millenarianism, which was gaining renewed attention in Scandinavia, as in the British Isles and North America, during the war. In one of his characteristic generalisations, Witt believed that hope in the imminent Second Coming of Christ

was "the only thing which keeps us away from the paths of selfishness", and he reported that his preaching on this theme "seizes the hearts of people everywhere, both believers and others".[87] After the end of the war Pethrus' congregation supported relief work in Vienna, and on one occasion Witt, who apparently could speak some German, accompanied Pethrus to the Austrian capital as his interpreter in connection with this endeavour in social ministry.[88]

Eventually Witt retired to a cottage in Östhammar, a picturesque village on the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia north-east of Uppsala. This was a region which he had often visited as an evangelist. In 1922 he published his memoirs, which cover his life only until his return to Sweden from Natal in 1891 and betray his obvious bitterness towards the Lutheran heritage which he had left while in his early forties. Witt died at Östhammar on 25 August 1923, seventy-five years old.[89] As indicated in Chapter I, his passing aroused little notice. He had continued to contribute occasionally to religious periodicals until shortly before his death, but he had sharply curtailed his itinerant preaching a few years earlier. Witt died a largely forgotten man.

Notes

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2. Otto Witt (Haparanda) to *Missionæren*, 2 October 1891, in *Missionæren*, III, no. 36 (22 October 1891), p. 285.

3. Riksarkivet, Private Archives 410, box 3, M. Hansen, *Tiaarsberetning for Den frie østafrikanske Mission fra 1ste Januar 1889 til 30te Juni 1899* (Larvik, M. Andersens Boktrykkeri, [1899]), p. 20.

4. M. H[ansen], "Fra Kristiania", *Missionæren*, III, no. 46 (31 December 1891), pp. 365-366.

5. Otto Witt (Kristiania) to *Missionæren*, 10 December 1891, in *Missionæren*, III, no. 44 (17 December 1891), pp. 349-350.

6. M. Hansen (Kristiania) to *Missionæren*, 15 January 1892, in *Missionæren*, IV, no. 4 (28 January 1892), pp. 29-30.

7. M. H[ansen], "Pastor Witts Foredrag", *Missionæren*, IV, no. 2 (14 January 1892), pp. 13-14.

8. Otto Witt (Larvik) to *Missionæren*, 16 November 1891, in *Missionæren*, III, no. 41 (26 November 1891), p. 324.

9. Otto Witt (Worcester, Massachusetts, U.S.A.) to *Missionæren*, 16 March 1892, in *Missionæren*, IV, no. 15 (14 April 1892), p. 117.

10. E.A. Nordquelle, "Mit levnetslöp", *Det gode Budskab*, XXI, nos. 19-20 (October 1924), p. 4.

11. Asbjörn Froholt, "Erik Andersen Nordquelle - en ny tone innen norsk vekkelseskristendom" (*candidatus philologiae* thesis, University of Oslo, 1980), p. 20.

12. Erik Andersen, "Brev til Jakob", *Missionæren*, V, no. 21 (25 May 1893), p. 3.

13. Nordquelle, "Mit levnetslöp", p. 4.

14. "Referat af Kristiania frie Missionsforenings Aarsmöde i 'Betlehem'", *Missionæren*, V, no. 30 (27 July 1893), pp. 1-2.

15. The text was announced as II Corinthians 5:25, a non-existent verse.

16. Otto Witt, "Han bar af vor Synd paa Korsets Træ!", *Ild-Tungen*, V, no. 5 (May 1896), pp. 18-19.

17. Otto Witt, "5 Mosebog, 34", *Ild-Tungen*, IV, no. 10 (October 1895), p. 38.

18. Hansen, "Pastor Witts Foredrag", p. 13.

19. Otto Witt, *Kristi återkomst och Tusenåriga riket* (Stockholm, privately published, 1895).

20. "Ild-Tungen", *Ild-Tungen*, V, no. 8 (August 1896), p. 31; Otto Witt, "Kristi gjenkomst og Det tusindaarige Rige", *Ild-Tungen*, V, no. 8 (August 1896), p. 36.

21. Witt, *Kristi återkomst*, p. 3.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-6.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-16.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

26. Almost certainly meant is Joseph Rabinovich (1837-1899), a Jew from Bessarabia who visited Palestine in the early 1880s but soon became disillusioned with Zionism. After returning to his homeland, Rabinovich launched a sect called "The Children of Israel of the New Testament", which combined Jewish traditions with Christian customs. He converted to Protestantism in 1885 and became a fairly well-known, if hardly very successful, missionary to Russian Jews.

27. Witt, *Kristi återkomst*, pp. 18-22.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

30. Froholt, "Erik Andersen Nordquelle", pp. 59-63.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

32. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, 4 July 1905, in *Det gode Budskab*, II, no. 15 (1 August 1905), p. 57.

33. Nils Bloch-Hoell, *Pinsebevegelsen* (Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1956), pp. 110-207.

34. T.B. Barratt, *Erindringer* (Oslo, Filadelfiaforlaget, 1941), p. 134.

35. "Vækkelsen utbrudt i Kristiania", *Byposten*, IV, no. 1 (12 January 1907), p. 2.

36. Erik Andersen, "Dag for dag 1906", *Det gode Budskab*, IV, no. 10 (15 May 1907), p. 39.

37. *Aftenposten* (Kristiania), 6 January 1907.

38. *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm), 7 January 1907.

39. E.H.T. (Kristiania) to *Svenska Dagbladet*, 21 January 1907, in *Svenska Dagbladet* (Stockholm), 25 January 1907.

40. *Dagens Nyheter*, 28 January 1907.

41. *Dagens Nyheter*, 2 February 1907.

42. *Dagens Nyheter*, 15 February 1907.

43. Otto Witt, "Det helbredende Ord", *Ild-Tungen*, VI, no. 11 (November 1897), pp. 81-82.

44. Otto Witt (Durban) to *Trons Segrar*, 20 May 1891, in *Trons Segrar*, II, no. 7 (July 1891), pp. 144-145.

45. Otto Witt, "Herren din läkare", *Trons Segrar*, V, no. 16 (15 August 1894), pp. 241-244.

46. Otto Witt, *Tungomålstalandet och öfriga andens gåfvor i Bibelns ljus* (Stockholm, Bokförlags-Aktiebolaget Puritas, 1907), pp. 5-6.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-13.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-24.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-29.

54. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, 5 March 1908, in *Det gode Budskab*, V, no. 7 (1 April 1908), p. 25.

55. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, 18 September 1910, in *Det gode Budskab*, VII, no. 20 (15 October 1910), p. 77.

56. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, 23 November 1908, in *Det gode Budskab*, V, no. 24 (15 December 1908), pp. 93-94.

57. *Wecko-Posten*, 27 February 1908.

58. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to C.G. Lundin, 7 March 1908, in *Svenska Tribunen* (Örebro), 18 March 1908.

59. Otto Witt, *Hemligheten af Kristi kropp, som är församlingen* (Stockholm, Puritas, 1908), pp. 7-19.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-28.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34, 39-40.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-64.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-81.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-88.

68. Otto Witt, "Låtom os gå ut till honom utanför lägret, bärande hans smälek", *Det gode Budskab*, VIII, no. 10 (15 May 1911), p. 37.

69. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, 18 September 1913, in *Det gode Budskab*, X, no. 20 (15 October 1913), p. 80.

70. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, 18 September 1910, p. 77.

71. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, 23 November 1908, in *Det gode Budskab*, V, no. 24 (15 December 1908), pp. 93-94.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

73. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, 12 February 1909, in *Det gode Budskab*, VI, no. 6 (15 March 1909), p. 22.

74. T.B. Barratt, "Fra min dagbok", *Korsets Seir*, X, no. 19 (1 October 1913), p. 149.

75. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, 18 September 1913, p. 80.

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78. T.B. Barratt, "'Den s.k. "Pingstväckelsen" og bibelordet'", *Korsets Seir*, XX, no. 17 (23 June 1923), pp. 5-6.

79. The two standard biographies, neither of them adequate, are Olof Seger, *David Petander. En skildring av hans vandringsår* (Uppsala, Lindblad, 1929) and Sigge Swensson, *Vandrarprästen. David Petanders liv och förkunnelse* (Uppsala, Lindblad, 1933).

80. Otto Witt (Stockholm) to *Det gode Budskab*, undated, in *Det gode Budskab*, X, no. 13 (1 July 1913), pp. 49-50.

81. Otto Witt, *Kan en troende bära vapen?* (Stockholm, Bok & Accidenstryckeri Thule, 1915), pp. 5-24.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-19.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

85. Otto Witt (unspecified provenance) to *Det gode Budskap*, undated, in *Det gode Budskap*, XIV, no. 21 (1 November 1917), p. 79.

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87. Otto Witt (Kristiania) to Lewi Pethrus, undated, in *Evangelii Härold* (Stockholm), 13 July 1916.

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CHAPTER IX

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have followed Otto Witt on his tortuous journey for approximately half a century. Geographically, his road through life was long and looping; he travelled it twice to Southern Africa, once to North America, once to Austria, and throughout Sweden and Norway on countless evangelistic tours. Theologically, this pastor's son was raised in the pietistic climes of south-western Sweden, studied under confessionally orthodox Lutheran professors at the University of Lund, came directly or indirectly under neo-evangelical and millenarian influences in Natal, emerged as a prominent advocate of Christian perfectionism after returning to Scandinavia, and became an enthusiastic if critical supporter of the Pentecostal movement in northern Europe. His theology, in brief, moved generally from objective Lutheranism (apparently tempered from the outset by a lack of assurance of salvation in the tradition of Henric Schartau) far in the direction of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century subjectivity. A merely intellectual assent to confessional doctrines apparently never satisfied Witt's spiritual longings, and after cutting his ties to his birthright Lutheran tradition he emphasised increasingly the place of ongoing sanctification in the salvation of individual Christians. Along the way he became a pacifist and adopted the other positions described in Chapter VIII, none of which he is known ever to have disavowed.

What conclusions can we now draw about Witt, especially with regard to his significance in the history of the SKM, Southern African missions history in general, and the history of Christianity in Scandinavia? Was he an important figure, a groundbreaking pioneer to whom many contemporary and subsequent developments can defensibly be ascribed? Or must Witt be dismissed as an ephemeral one whom ecclesiastical historians should regard as Macbeth viewed life, namely as "a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more"?

It is tempting, admittedly, to take the latter course, and indeed a review of the pertinent historiographical literature presented in Chapter I indicates that for several decades church historians and other scholars have generally done so. Their reluctance

to take Witt seriously is understandable and cannot be attributed solely to the embarrassment he caused by leaving the SKM in 1890. Many of his ideas and accomplishments were, after all, written in water, not engraved in stone. The few ripples which emanated from them dissipated within years, in some cases within months. A small number of examples will illustrate the point. By the end of the 1880s Witt had definitely come out against the establishment and maintenance of a school and a children's home at Oscarsberg, institutions which he had helped to found and to which he had devoted a great deal of energy for much of that decade. His superiors in the SKM, however, most notably Henry Tottie, insisted that social ministry remain a central pillar of the missionary work in Natal and successfully resisted Witt's efforts to reduce or terminate it. His rationale for emphasising primary evangelism and playing down educational work was partly racist; he declared explicitly that conventional, European-influenced education was not appropriate for Africans. The SKM, like many other missionary societies, thought otherwise and continued to expand its endeavours to provide schools for Zulus in several parts of Natal and, beginning very early in the twentieth century, Johannesburg and environs. Witt also believed in the imminence of the return of Christ, a conviction which corroborated his anti-educational stance. Yet his eschatological dream, like those of many other millenarians, remained unfulfilled. Witt hoped to lead the SKM in the direction of more itinerant evangelism, but in this, too, he was frustrated; Swedish Lutheran missions in Southern Africa became increasingly institutional after he departed. Other SKM personnel founded schools, hospitals, and other institutions, while eventually less emphasis was placed on primary evangelism, a task which they turned over to pastors and evangelists of the indigenous church. Witt hoped to realise the original SKM dream of establishing a field in Zululand, and in the late 1880s he devoted a good deal of his time to proclamation of the Gospel on the other side of the Buffalo River. But here, as well, his efforts came to virtually naught, first because Anglican counterparts resented what they regarded as his unjustified incursions into their sphere of influence and later because both his personal interest in urban evangelism and his wife's failing health compelled him to move to Durban in 1890. Even Witt's vision of founding a Swedish immigrant colony in Natal never became reality, due to factors quite beyond his control.

Turning to Witt's nearly two years of direct involvement in the FEAM, we also find that in some respects his influence did not long endure. Initially he exercised considerable control over the neophyte Scandinavian missionaries who landed in Durban in August 1889. Witt convinced them to declare their independence from the steering committee in Kristiania and persuaded Olaf Wettergreen to undertake ambulatory evangelism with him in and near the Tugela Valley for several months. But after Witt's departure from Natal in 1891 the remaining FEAM missionaries reverted to conventional forms of work, especially at their station, Ekutandaneni, where they opened a school which served as a focal point of the activity there for more than half a century. They also re-established ties with sponsors in Scandinavia, though on a looser basis than had originally been the case. Eventually the FEAM became a fairly typical, if very small, denominational mission, one of the first fields of the Norwegian Mission Covenant, a development which ran counter to Witt's views of what both the visible church and Christian missionary work in general should be.

There is, however, another side of the story. While Witt's lasting influence in Scandinavian missions history should not be exaggerated, one can list several areas in which he made a lasting impact. First and foremost, one can point to the existence of the SKM mission to the Zulus. Notwithstanding his occasional clashes with colleagues, indigenes in the neighbourhood, the British and Natal press, and even the law in Natal, Witt was an energetic, ground-breaking missionary who deserves credit for helping to establish and maintain Swedish Lutheran work in Southern Africa. We cannot, of course, indulge in conditional questions and ask whether the field would have developed had he never entered it. We can only point to the fact that Witt toiled arduously to plant and nurture what eventually grew into a thriving missionary enterprise. He proclaimed the Gospel practically without respite for many years, prepared converts for baptism, administered that sacrament and the Lord's Supper, led Sunday worship, conducted a mid-week evening meeting, and faithfully did other ministerial tasks for the SKM for more than a decade in Natal. While in Sweden in 1879 and 1880 he travelled and spoke extensively doing deputation work to strengthen the young SKM. After returning to Natal Witt taught with apparent

joy for several years at the school which he had founded at Oscarsberg. To him also goes credit for establishing the children's home at this first SKM station.

Oscarsberg itself long remained a *de facto* memorial to Witt's pioneering work on behalf of the SKM. It continued to be the cardinal Swedish Lutheran station in Southern Africa until after 1900. During the twentieth century Oscarsberg included for many years a theological college for training Zulus for the ministry in the Lutheran churches of the country, especially those amongst people of that ethnic group. This educational venture was ultimately moved to Umpumulo near Mapumulo, but an arts and crafts school opened at Oscarsberg, thus keeping the station on the educational map of South Africa long after the SKM was forced to relinquish its general schools to the state in the wake of the Bantu Education Act during the 1950s.

With regard to at least two other central matters Witt was arguably a progressive missionary whose policies and actions pointed to future developments in the SKM's Southern African field. The first was his use of Zulu evangelists. At a much earlier stage of its history than had been the case in the Norwegian Missionary Society, to cite a convenient parallel, the SKM gave considerable responsibility to such young men as Josef ka Mataka and Johannes Mamoza. It will be recalled that Witt brought the former with him to Sweden in 1879 and enrolled him at the Johannelund training college in Stockholm and employed him both as a teacher and an evangelist in the mid-1880s. To be sure, the conservative inspector Henry Tottie thought that Mamoza was not adequately prepared for the responsibilities which Witt had bestowed on him at approximately the same time and recommended that Witt continue to give him personal instruction on an almost daily basis. Nevertheless, by sharing his burden with these converts Witt probably accelerated the indigenisation of the church at and near Oscarsberg, thereby establishing a precedent for limited black leadership which eventually became the norm in this field. That the transition did not proceed as rapidly during the first half of the twentieth century as in retrospect may seem desirable is undeniable. One suspects that it may have come about more quickly had Witt remained in the SKM and not given himself so much to itinerant evangelism. When he did so, largely during his period of association with the FEAM, he did not make use of Zulu evangelists and teachers as had been the case while he was engaged at least partly in institutional ministry at Oscarsberg. This change, however,

can be attributed to his millenarian expectations which prompted him to stress simple proclamation of the Gospel to as many indigenes as possible before the awaited Second Advent occurred.

Secondly, Witt's involvement in urban evangelism pointed towards future trends in the SKM and indeed in the unfolding of missionary endeavours generally in Southern Africa. In 1890 he became one of the first missionaries to devote himself to the proclamation of the Gospel to migratory black labourers when he, together with some of his colleagues in the FEAM, undertook such work in the compounds as well as outdoors in Durban. Almost simultaneously, the Norwegian Missionary Society assigned Ole Stavem to work amongst the Zulus in that city while also ministering to the congregation of the Norwegian Lutheran church there. The SKM never pursued work in Durban in any major way, although as early as the mid-1890s two of its missionaries explored the possibility of establishing a station in Johannesburg, which for nearly a decade had attracted large numbers of young men from the congregations which the SKM served in Natal. Such a venture was postponed because of the Second Anglo-Boer War but undertaken in 1902. The Johannesburg station soon spawned numerous out-stations on the Witwatersrand and became a focal point of the SKM's activities in South Africa until apartheid legislation enacted in the 1950s drastically reduced the number of Africans residing in the centre of the city.

In the interest of historical accuracy, it should be stressed that one cannot draw a direct line between Witt's evangelism in Durban and subsequent SKM undertakings in and near Johannesburg. The latter almost certainly would have developed even if Witt had never set foot in Durban, and it did so along lines considerably different from those which Witt followed. In brief, he emphasised primary evangelism and little else. The SKM, by contrast, established evening schools and other elements of institutional ministry practically from the outset of its involvement on the Witwatersrand.

This nuanced picture of Witt's failings as well as his more enduring influence as a missionary in the service of two organisations does not, of course, warrant him a niche in the pantheon of missions history. Yet it should suffice to demonstrate that on the whole his role, especially in the formative years of the SKM's endeavours

amongst the Zulus, was considerably greater than previous historiography indicates. Moreover, it is evident that the totality of the real Witt cannot be shoehorned into the caricature emerges from the existing literature, namely as a maverick who ran counter to virtually everything the SKM was seeking to accomplish in Natal.

But what conclusions can be drawn about Witt's decades of spiritual wandering and his career as an independent evangelist in Sweden and Norway after his return to Scandinavia in 1891? Where do these aspects of his life fit in the larger picture of ecclesiastical history?

It must first be pointed out that nearly any conclusions drawn about the last three decades of his life must be tentative and incomplete. The very nature of his ministry militated against the existence - not to speak of the preservation - of an extensive body of documents which would ease our task. The extant sources are relatively thin and tell us far more about the shifts in his religious thought than the influences which directly changed his views about such matters as ecclesiology and Christian pacifism. Not even his memoirs, which, taken *cum grano salis*, provide some useful insights into his early years and career in Southern Africa, shed any light on the period after 1891.

Stepping back momentarily to 1885, the year of Witt's principal spiritual crisis in Natal, if we accept his own testimony at face value we can reason that his pietistic background in the Schartau tradition, with assurance of personal salvation pegged to a specific *ordo salutis*, failed him as he endured several years of frustrating efforts on the cutting edge of the SKM's work amongst the Zulus. If, as we have surmised, his colleague Ida Jonatanson helped to extract him from his *Anfechtungen* of that year by proclaiming to him the assurance of salvation which neo-evangelism to which she had been exposed in Sweden, then one part of the spiritual riddle in Witt's biography has been solved. What the extant sources fail to tell us, however, is how Witt proceeded from this assurance to Christian perfectionism by the early 1890s. It is much easier to deduce that he had become an unambivalent adherent of futurist millenarianism by 1889 or 1890 while he was co-operating with the men and women of the FEAM than to discern how his understanding of sanctification drifted so far from both Lutheran confessionalism and conventional pietism. It may be, of course, that Witt arrived at his ultimate position largely through independent study of the

New Testament, although this is simply not demonstrable. There is no clear evidence, however, that Anglo-Saxon Reformed missionaries or Andrew Murray were responsible for the changes in his theology and strategy.

Much the same must unfortunately be said of the etiology of some of the religious views he propounded in Scandinavia beginning in 1891. In the irregular series of books which Witt wrote, he almost never referred to other authors who may have inspired him. Again, it is conceivable that he arrived at some of his positions partly through independent study, combining his own reading of the Scriptures with that of the works of other religious writers. This appears to have been the case with regard to his variations of futurist millenarianism. Perhaps only in connection with the coming of Pentecostalism via Norway to Sweden can the lines of influence on Witt be readily traced. His close association with Erik Andersen is so obvious that it cannot be overlooked at this critical juncture in his spiritual wanderings.

Conclusions are particularly difficult to draw when assessing Witt's impact on religious life in Sweden and Norway after 1891. As in the case of his career in Natal, it is easy - and probably too facile - to dismiss him as an insignificant nonconformist who stood too far from normative Lutheran or most free church circles to exercise any noteworthy influence on them. Undeniably, Witt was a churchman out of season. In terms of polity and ecclesiology, his view of the church as little more than an invisible fellowship of Christian perfection clashed with the position of virtually every denomination in Scandinavia. Similarly, Witt's hostility to ecclesiastical bureaucracy countered historic tendencies in most denominations to become organisationally entrenched on the religious landscape of Sweden and many other countries. And Witt's independent evangelism, though by no means without precedent in either Sweden or Norway, was also a phenomenon which was losing favour at that time. Small wonder that he admired and felt an affinity with David Petander, whose pacifism also gained his sympathy. In none of these areas can Witt be said to have contributed to subsequent developments in Scandinavian religious history. The millenarianism which he propounded, moreover, was largely redundant; he may well have convinced other northern Europeans to await the imminent return of Christ (though such influence is not empirically demonstrable), but in the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century there was so much millenarian literature in Scandinavia

that Witt's book and articles on the subject probably added little if anything which readers could not have learnt from other sources.

Witt's greatest demonstrable influence during this period may thus have been his role in stimulating the establishment of Andersen's perfectionist denomination in Norway, the so-called "Free Friends". In any case, Andersen attributed to the Swede the inspiration for launching what developed into his loose, revivalistic movement, one with which Witt continued to be in full sympathy. The two men remained allies until Witt's death, and he contributed occasionally to Andersen's periodical, *Det gode Budskab*. Witt's role in this, despite the fact that he was, strictly speaking, a foreigner, was probably more consequential than his involvement in the Swedish Pentecostal movement.

Perhaps more than anything else, the course which Witt followed in Scandinavia after 1891 illustrates vividly several of the religious currents which flowed chiefly from British and American sources to northern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His influence may have been minimal, or in any case of little enduring historical significance. Yet owing in part to his unwillingness to compromise and to the blunt, unadorned style in which he generally wrote, Witt exemplified Christian perfectionism, futurist millenarianism, pacifism, independent evangelism, the rejection of denominationalism, and other tendencies of his day more dramatically than did nearly any other Scandinavian. In the last analysis, perhaps the study of his late career is more significant in terms of what it can teach us about peripheral movements in Swedish and Norwegian religious history than with regard to any direct influence he wielded after cutting his ties to the Lutheran tradition.

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